SETTING THE STAGE FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE: REFLECTING ON CREATIVE PLACEMAKING OUTCOMES

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MORTIMER & MIMI LEVITT FOUNDATION

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TOWARD A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF OUR WORK

Sharon Yazowski and Vanessa Silberman | Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation

When the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation embarked on this study four years ago, we began with one all encompassing question: How do we know if the Foundation's long-term creative placemaking investments in outdoor, permanent music venues and the nonprofits that manage them are creating the desired impacts—adding vitality to once-neglected public spaces; bringing people together of diverse ages, ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds; ensuring access to high caliber concerts through consistent free programming; and, ultimately, strengthening the social fabric of communities? In other words, how do we measure and define "success?"

How do we know if the Levitt Foundation's long-term creative placemaking investments are creating the desired impacts—how do we measure and define success?

We recognized that the Levitt Foundation's theory of change regarding the outcomes and impact of these permanent music venues presenting free concerts contained many underlying assumptions, which we were keen to test. Among these assumptions were how Levitt venues and the free programming presented improve overall city livability, raise the quality of life, increase attachment to community and community engagement, improve perceptions of the public space and surrounding area, and create a stronger sense of neighborliness and social connectivity. While we had learned a fair amount about the program's impact through regular visits to the Levitt venues, conversations with a variety of stakeholders, and annual reports and audience surveys provided by our Friends of Levitt partners, we sought a more rigorous, objective approach that would provide us with new information and insights to guide our work.

The 2012 recommendation by entities like ArtPlace America and the National Endowment for the Arts to use a set of indicators with nationally available data to measure the impact of creative placemaking projects further sparked our desire to undertake an independent study. We wondered whether these indicators, primarily economic and demographic in nature, could shed additional light on the impact of permanent Levitt venues across the country—especially since these venues, while locally driven and realized, share a common mission, framework and program goals to strengthen communities through free, live music. Would the data collected through the uniform indicators approach present a clear picture of

outcomes and social impact and illuminate trends or similarities across the Levitt network of music venues?

With these questions in mind, we commissioned a third-party study with Slover Linett Audience Research and Dr. Joanna Woronkowicz to test the assumptions outlined in our theory of change and provide us with a new, data-driven understanding of the social impact of permanent Levitt venues. We hoped the study—a mix of primary research conducted by Slover Linett using qualitative and quantitative methods, and secondary research conducted by Dr. Woronkowicz using a quantitative indicators approach—might inspire refinements or challenge the assumptions underlying our venture philanthropy model and the program itself, with the goal of creating greater impact. We also sought to uncover any unintended effects of these long-term creative placemaking interventions.

We hope this new body of research contributes to the creative placemaking field and the funding community at large, sparking further dialogue on how to measure outcomes and impact and on the role of creative placemaking projects in strengthening communities and promoting social connectivity. We would like to thank the Slover Linett team, in particular Sarah Lee and Peter Linett, as well as Dr. Woronkowicz for their rigorous and thoughtful analysis throughout this multi-year, multi-layered process. The new knowledge gleaned from this study has already begun informing the work of the Levitt Foundation and will continue to do so moving forward. We also thank the staff of the five permanent Levitt venues for their participation and openness during this study. Last but not least, we are grateful to the Bruner Foundation for its generous support of this work.

We believe the recommendations and implications discussed in this white paper will provide valuable guidance to a wide range of creative placemaking efforts, from music-based projects like ours to those involving other arts disciplines, and both temporary and long-term investments. Please share your thoughts and comments, and we look forward to continuing the conversation.

Sharon Yazowski
Executive Director

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ABOUT THE MORTIMER & MIMI LEVITT FOUNDATION

The Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation is a private foundation that exists to strengthen the social fabric of America. Through its support of **creative placemaking**, the Levitt Foundation empowers communities to transform underused public spaces—neglected parks, vacant downtown lots, former brownfields—into welcoming destinations where the power of free, live music brings people together and invigorates community life.

The Levitt Foundation's primary funding areas include **permanent Levitt venues** and the **Levitt AMP [Your City] Grant Awards**. Both of these programs include free, family-friendly concerts in outdoor, open lawn settings; acclaimed, emerging talent to seasoned, award-winning performers in all music genres; a musician-friendly ethos in that all artists are paid for their performances and supported by professional sound and lighting; and concert sites that are accessible to a wide range of socioeconomic groups. As such, these programs embody the Foundation's funding philosophy and core values to support projects that are catalytic, dynamic, and promote joy, inclusivity and connectedness.

The Levitt Foundation invests in community-driven efforts that harness the power of partnerships and leverage community support. Permanent Levitt venues and Levitt AMP concert sites reflect the character of their town or city, while benefitting from the program framework and best practices provided by the Levitt Foundation. As a participatory funder, the Foundation provides Friends of Lev-

Catalytic – to empower communities to transform neglected or underused public spaces into vibrant destinations

Dynamic – to develop and support programs that are responsive to the needs of individual communities and spark a ripple effect of positive impact

Joy – to create environments where the power of music and the outdoors enrich individual lives and bring people together for socializing, dancing and exposure to the arts

Inclusivity – to champion free programming, with multiple opportunities to attend, in accessible open lawn settings where all feel welcome

Connectedness – to foster opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to spend time together, meet, mingle and share an experience

itt partners and Levitt AMP grantees with financial support, as well as information exchange platforms and convenings, meaningful tools and resources to help them bring their programs to life and maximize impact in their communities.

With the permanent Levitt venue program, the Foundation provides seed funding to renovate or build a state-of-the-art outdoor music venue, known as a Levitt Pavilion or Levitt Shell, as well as annual operating support to an independent Friends of Levitt nonprofit organization, which manages, programs and supports an annual series of 50 free concerts every year at the music venue. There are currently six permanent Levitt venues across the country—Los Angeles and Pasadena, Calif.; Westport, Conn.; Bethlehem, Pa.; Memphis, Tenn.; and Arlington, Texas—with over half a dozen more in development, including Denver (2017), Dayton (2018), Houston (2019), and Sioux Falls (2019), amongst other cities.

With the Levitt AMP [Your City] Grant Awards, the Foundation provides $25K annual matching grants to up to 15 nonprofits operating in small to mid-sized towns and cities to activate neglected public spaces through the Levitt AMP Music Series—10 free outdoor concerts presented over 10 to 12 weeks during summer or fall. Reflecting the Foundation's ethos that all Levitt projects are community-driven, each year finalists are selected through an online public voting process to help gauge the community's enthusiasm and need for the program.

The original Levitt Pavilion opened over four decades ago in the town of Westport, Conn., when community members came together to create a community gathering space for free concerts. When the town donated its problematic landfill located in the middle of Westport, a capital campaign ensued. As summer residents of Westport, New York-based philanthropists Mortimer (who had amassed a fortune through his clothing company, The Custom Shop) and Mimi Levitt were approached to support the effort and ultimately became the largest private contributors, prompting the town to name the pavilion after them. Mortimer and Mimi were active members of the local Friends of Levitt board and over the years, the Levitt Pavilion's programming evolved to include more than 50

free professional concerts every summer. Carrying memories of his impoverished childhood, Mortimer was proud that the high caliber concerts at the Levitt Pavilion were always free.

During the late 1990s, Levitt Pavilion Westport's continuing success as a community destination inspired Mortimer to develop a venture philanthropy model to bring free concerts to additional cities through new Levitt venues. He then passed the baton on to his daughter, Liz Levitt Hirsch, to oversee the growth of Levitt venues across the country.

In recent years, the Levitt Foundation's giving focus has evolved to be more responsive to communities, resulting in the expansion of Levitt locations. In 2013, when this study commenced, free Levitt concerts supported by the Foundation reached approximately 400,000 people each year in six cities. Since then, audiences have grown incrementally at permanent Levitt venues, and with the introduction of the Levitt AMP program in 2014, Levitt concerts today serve more than 600,000 people annually in 22 towns and cities. With more permanent Levitt venues in development, it is anticipated the number of people served by Levitt programs will continue to grow.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Peter Linett | Slover Linett Audience Research

The Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation empowers communities across the nation to revitalize underused public spaces through the power of free, live music. The Foundation focuses on two key program areas: permanent Levitt music venues and the Levitt AMP [Your City] Grant Awards. Currently, there are six permanent Levitt performance venues across the country, with four more in development, in communities from Pasadena, California to Arlington, Texas to Memphis, and in sites ranging from previously decrepit WPA-era band shells in challenged parks to previously vacant lots in once-dormant downtown areas. This kind of arts-based effort to revitalize a neighborhood, community, or city has, over the last decade, come to be known as "creative placemaking," a movement that now includes a wide spectrum of projects, from efforts to invest in cultural amenities in order to make a place more attractive for economic development and a vibrant workforce, to artist-driven social and community projects that use creativity to improve the physical and social fabric of neighborhoods.[1]

As the creative placemaking field has flourished, with national funders directing tens of millions of dollars to creative placemaking projects in all 50 states and U.S. territories, there has been a growing interest in measuring and understanding the impact of these projects, particularly with respect to their contribution to the economic vitality, livability, vibrancy, social capital, and civic engagement of the communities in which they take place. At first, creative placemaking assessment efforts were focused on developing "indicators" of change and success: new frameworks for bringing together a variety of data points that are related to intended creative placemaking outcomes, which can be tracked over time to gauge the impact of the investment in creative placemaking initiatives.[2] But it has since become clear that the indicators approach has real limitations, especially with respect to connecting changes in the indicators with specific features or activities of any given creative placemaking project.[3] So more recently, a body of project-specific studies has been growing, many of which use multiple methods to directly measure the effects that creative placemaking projects have had on the people and places involved, and to shed light on the mechanisms by which they bring about change. Such locally tailored studies also offer ways to avoid a problem that some observers have noted in indicators-based approaches: that the use of economic data can

It has become clear that the indicators approach has real limitations.

overlook the displacement of some residents and unintentionally endorse gentrification in the name of economic vibrancy.

In that vein, the Levitt Foundation commissioned a multi-mode study in 2013 to better understand and document the impact of the six permanent music venues, which receive major grants from the Foundation—on the individuals who attend them, on the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located, and on the cities as a whole. The study was designed to test the Foundation's hypotheses about the outcomes assumed to result from the existence of, and the programming provided by, each venue and to explore *how* the venues are bringing about any observed changes and *whether* they are creating social impact in their communities. More broadly, it was also conceived as an opportunity to learn more about the challenges of measuring the social impact of creative placemaking projects using multiple research and analysis methods.

A multi-modal study to explore *how* the venues are bringing about observed changes and *whether* they are creating social impact.

The study consists of three components: an **Indirect Outcomes Assessment**, which is largely modeled after the National Endowment for the Arts' "Arts & Livability Indicators" system and uses existing national data to measure change on various dimensions in the communities around five permanent Levitt venues; an **Audience & Community Outcomes Exploration**, which uses primary qualitative and quantitative data collection among concertgoers and neighborhood residents in two Levitt communities (Memphis and Pasadena, California) to explore the effects "on the ground" in those communities; and a **Pre/Post Community Outcomes Study**, which also uses primary qualitative and quantitative data collection, this time with a "pre-post design" to document changes from before a new Levitt Pavilion opens in Denver in 2017 to after it has been in operation for a full season. The present document includes a reflection on the first research component and the full paper based on the second component; a paper based on the third component will be released in early 2019.

INDIRECT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT

In this paper, Dr. Joanna Woronkowicz of Indiana University shares reflections on her recent indicators-based analysis of neighborhood change in five Levitt com-

munities, "Levitt Music Venues and Neighborhood Change: Reflections on a Creative Placemaking Indicators Analysis." That analysis resulted in an internal report to the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation and a peer-reviewed article in the *Journal of Planning Education and Research* titled "Art-Making or Place-Making? The Relationship between Open-Air Performance Venues and Neighborhood Change" (2015); the journal article is available as a companion to this white paper.

Using data from the U.S. Decennial Census and the American Community Survey, Dr. Woronkowicz analyzed change in five of the communities with a permanent Levitt venue between 1990 and 2011 on three broad dimensions: residents' attachment to the community; quality of life; and economic conditions. Her analysis largely follows the National Endowment for the Arts' 2014 Validating Arts & Livability Indicators (VALI) study in constructing each of these dimensions. By analyzing national data sets on a highly local level to assess the changes in those VALI categories that have taken place in neighborhoods during the period in which the Levitt venues were founded and the years following, Dr. Woronkowicz sought to shed additional light on the value of an indicators-based approach to creative placemaking impact research.

The news about that value is mixed at best. Dr. Woronkowicz's analysis shows that indicator trends varied widely across the five Levitt neighborhoods in the study. Some neighborhoods saw improvements related to residents' attachment to community, while others did not. The same was true for quality of life and economic conditions. Even within these broad categories, some indicators pointed toward improvements, and others pointed in the opposite direction. From this, Dr. Woronkowicz draws three conclusions: First, that the indirect impacts of Levitt pavilions are probably largely dependent on the unique neighborhood context and other conditions that exist prior to the introduction of the Levitt venue. Second, that that context and those conditions can't be understood through an analysis of existing data sets, at least not the nationally available (and therefore comparable) data sets used in her analysis. And third, that for those reasons, the indicators method is probably not the most effective way of understanding the effects of creative placemaking initiatives. To authentically evaluate the impact of an initiative, both its unique goals and the unique conditions of the community must be taken into account. In the case of the Levitt Foundation and its nonprofit and civic partners in each city, those goals include concepts like neighborhood cohesion and providing a safe, vibrant place for neighbors to interact—concepts which are

inherently difficult to measure through the standardized data sources that can be aggregated in an indicators framework.

AUDIENCE AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES EXPLORATION

In the second paper, "Levitt Venues in Memphis and Pasadena: An Audience and Community Outcomes Study," Sarah Lee, president of the cultural research firm Slover Linett, and her colleague, Nicole Baltazar, summarize the findings of the Audience and Community Outcomes Exploration they conducted at the Levitt Pavilion in Pasadena and the Levitt Shell in Memphis. In both locations, the team used a mix of primary quantitative and qualitative social research methods, including participant observation and in-context interviewing with audiences at half a dozen concerts; a quantitative survey of attendees at a sample of concerts throughout each venue's summer season; interviews with elected officials, a variety of local business owners, neighborhood social- and human-service providers, funders and philanthropists, other community and cultural leaders, and Levitt venue staff and board members in each community; and community discussion groups with a mix of residents in each city.

This hybrid experience of the arts and community connection helps to foster a deeply communal spirit at Levitt concerts.

Assimilating these multiple perspectives across the two research sites, the team finds that Levitt venues offer a *hybrid experience* of the arts and community connection: attending a concert at a Levitt venue is not solely and exclusively about the music, but neither is the music incidental to the quality and value of the experience. Rather, the experience is a complex interweaving of musical, social, and community elements. This hybridity helps to foster a deeply communal spirit at Levitt concerts. The musical performance offers an experience that is shared among those in attendance, while still allowing social interaction and connection among audience members to take place. Being able to interact with people *within* one's existing social network (including those who attend together and those who encounter each other serendipitously at the concert) is an especially important part of the experience for many concertgoers. This makes Levitt venues a successful platform for what sociologists call "bonding social capital,"[4] or the ties that connect members of a group to each other and form a social safety net. The researchers also found that Levitt venues foster interactions across social networks. This helps build "bridging social capital,"[5] or

points of connection, understanding, and exchange between and across diverse social groups. Levitt concerts do this by providing a forum for residents to come together in a defined space in a way that enables them to have friendly interactions with people unlike themselves. Levitt concertgoers feel a sense of "all are welcome," which is heightened by the fact that there are literally no doors or walls to keep some in the venue and others outside of it. The demographics of the audiences Lee and her colleagues surveyed in Pasadena and Memphis suggest a level of diversity along multiple dimensions that is rarely found in arts settings (particularly the formal performing arts, but also many other niche cultural experiences that appeal to only one demographic or psychographic "type" or community). The open lawn setting at all Levitt venues and free admission for the concert series engender a "leveling" effect: concertgoers feel a sense of equality with their fellow audience members, a sense that socioeconomic differences fade away while enjoying a Levitt concert. Again, the music is not incidental to these social effects. Levitt concerts are almost universally expected to include high quality music, and audiences believe that the performers booked by Levitt venues will meet high standards whether they are local musicians or artists of national stature. While the music is a central reason that people attend, many choose to attend irrespective of the *particular* artists performing; they have come to view Levitt as a trusted curator that will expose them to new music genres and artists they will enjoy. So the success of Levitt venues as placemaking enterprises may hinge not just on their creating welcoming, appealing public environments but also on their being astute musical programmers who know what will appeal to their communities.

The success of Levitt venues hinges on being astute musical programmers in addition to creating welcoming environments.

The research team also observed that the presence of Levitt venues in these two cities played, and continues to play, an important role in broader physical and economic revitalization efforts in the immediate areas and surrounding communities. In both Pasadena and Memphis, the Levitt Foundation worked with the city government and a local Friends of Levitt nonprofit to restore an existing but run-down WPA-era band shell. The restoration of both band shells contributed to reinvestment in and reactivation of the parks where they are located. Stakeholders described both parks as being unsafe and in disuse before the restoration; now they are used actively both during and outside of Levitt concerts, and concertgoers almost unanimously report feeling safe at each. The Levitt venues also

support revitalization of the area by spurring economic activity in the neighborhoods around the venue. Concertgoers patronize local businesses such as bars, restaurants, and retail outlets before and after the show. Some of those concertgoers live in the immediate vicinity of the Levitt venue, so their spending helps keep economic activity in the neighborhood; others come to the neighborhood from other areas, bringing incremental revenue to the area. In both Memphis and Pasadena, the Levitt venues are perceived to have had an important catalytic and contributory role in the broader revitalization of the neighborhoods beyond the parks, but in neither case was the venue solely responsible for those developments. This is probably true of most creative placemaking efforts, and it is consistent with the way the Levitt Foundation selects communities for a possible Levitt venue: considering both the community's *need* (whether it has substantial neglected or underutilized public space, and whether it lacks accessible arts and cultural offerings) and its *readiness* (whether there is commitment and support from local leadership and residents to improve a public space and the surrounding area). In both of the cities studied in this evaluation, that dual picture of need and readiness appears to have been well supported: the Levitt venue was one among several strategies for community vitality, and the readiness and commitment shown by local stakeholders was reflected in their support not just for the Levitt project but also for parallel undertakings with similar goals.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

Since every creative placemaking project is unique, its success depends on the goals it is trying to achieve and the specific context in which it operates. Yet the two completed components of the Levitt Foundation study, taken together, point to some broad implications for the creative placemaking field, and particularly for projects that have free live music programming at their core. We list them briefly here and discuss them in more detail in the final section of this document.

In creative placemaking, programming is as important as place in providing a compelling and communal experience for participants. Creative placemaking projects must pay equal attention to the creative and artistic programming they offer, as well as the physical attributes that support community-building and social capital-building—it may be helpful to think in terms of *hybrid experiences*, in which the art itself is closely interwoven with social connection and participation.

For music providers in particular, a venue's programming can communicate subtle but important messages regarding who might feel welcome. To bring together a truly diverse community, music-centered projects may need to include programming that authentically reflects the diverse backgrounds and varied tastes of that community. Offering a diverse and eclectic roster of genres and performers, all of high quality, is critical to making sure the venue speaks to multiple segments of the population.

The physical and logistical attributes of a creative placemaking project will guide how people participate in, and how they benefit from, the experience. When developing a project, creative placemakers and their colleagues should carefully consider how their space or location establishes or reinforces the kind of participation they hope to see, as well as how potential barriers to entry (like location, price, proximity to public transportation, etc.) inform who participates and how frequently they participate.

Communicating explicitly about a project's community-building goals with participants and residents can help to engage them as informal ambassadors. Local audiences can be strong advocates for creative placemaking projects, encouraging their friends, family, and community members to attend and support these initiatives. Communicating a clear, specific message about community-building goals gives audiences the language to cement their own feelings about the creative placemaking project and communicate those feelings to others.

The history and sociology of the community in which the creative placemaking project takes place, and the specific site that is chosen, will profoundly inform the way the project unfolds. By recognizing when a community is poised for revitalization or when there are other investments being made in a community's social capital, placemakers can leverage their work for maximum impact and can help tip a community toward new levels of engagement. But a community's existing characteristics and history can also limit a project's potential. An in-depth awareness of a community's latent potential *and* persistent challenges can help initiatives set appropriate goals and develop targeted strategies for high-impact creative placemaking.

Partnership, coordination, and collaboration are essential creative placemaking skills and key to ensuring that the placemaking project remains

community-driven. Given that the aims of most creative placemaking projects are ambitious and systemic—it may simply not be realistic for any single project alone to substantially move the needle on a community's overall livability or economic vitality or social connectedness—connecting it with other social efforts and stakeholders is critical for effectively unlocking the full potential of a project.

There isn't a "one size fits all" method of assessing the success of creative placemaking projects. The creative placemaking field has been embracing the notion that primary data collection efforts should be combined with the existing indicators frameworks in order to assess the social impact of individual placemaking projects. We believe that this study illustrates this, showing how project-specific assessment reveals new insights about both the efficacy of creative placemaking projects and the mechanisms by which they operate—insights that would not be reached through an indicators approach alone.

We invite you to explore each section of this white paper in depth and look forward to sharing the third component of this study in early 2019. In the meantime, we invite your comments and feedback.

1. Markusen, Ann, and Anne Gadwa. Creative Placemaking. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2010. Accessed January 29, 2016. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf.
2. See, for example, Morley, Elaine, Mary K. Winkler, and The Urban Institute. "The Validating Arts and Livability Indicators (VALI) Study: Results and Recommendations." April 2014. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/VALI-Report.pdf.
3. See, for example, Markusen, Ann. "Fuzzy Concepts, Proxy Data." Createquity. November 9, 2012 or Moss, Ian David. "Creative Placemaking Has an Outcomes Problem." Createquity. May 9, 2012.
4. Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.
5. Ibid.

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Sarah Lee and Nicole Baltazar, Ph.D. | Slover Linett Audience Research

In the early 1970s, New York philanthropists Mortimer and Mimi Levitt, who had amassed a fortune in the custom clothing business, were approached by the community of Westport, Connecticut (where they owned a summer residence), to support a project to transform a blighted landfill site into an open-air pavilion where residents could come together and share in the experience of live outdoor music. As the campaign's largest private contributor, the town named the pavilion after the Levitts, and the original Levitt Pavilion opened in 1974. The pavilion became a vibrant place where the entire community could gather on the lawn to picnic, and enjoy free concerts. Twenty-five years later, Mortimer Levitt, having seen the impact of Westport's Levitt Pavilion for the Performing Arts, decided to shift the focus of the family foundation to the task of helping communities across the country develop their own Levitt Pavilion, transforming public spaces through the power of free, live music. Today, there are six permanent Levitt venues across the country in communities from Pasadena, California to Arlington, Texas to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and in sites ranging from previously decrepit WPA-era band shells to formerly vacant lots in once-dormant downtown areas, all receiving funding from the Levitt Foundation (see "About the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation," page 5). There are now four more permanent pavilions on the way in Denver, Dayton, Houston and Sioux Falls, and another 15 communities around the U.S. where underused public spaces are being activated by matching grants as part of the Levitt AMP Music Series, in collaboration with local organizations.

The vision that the Levitts helped realize in Westport was an example of the kind of arts-based effort to revitalize a neighborhood, community, or city that would eventually become known as "creative placemaking."

The vision that the Levitts helped realize in Westport was an example of the kind of arts-based effort to revitalize a neighborhood, community, or city that would eventually become known as "creative placemaking." That term was coined in 2010 in an influential National Endowment for the Arts-supported paper by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus [6] (the latter an advisor to this study), which reviewed the ways that creative placemaking has been a feature of American urban and rural development for decades. In the 1940s and 50s, urban development was dominated by large-scale, top-down urban renewal projects that often displaced people and demolished existing structures to make way for new housing, parks, highways, or other amenities. Ac-

tivists like Jane Jacobs began to challenge that mindset in the 1960s, advocating instead for an approach to urban development that emphasized mixed-use development, walkability, an active street life, and a general responsiveness to the lives, needs, and desires of the people who live, work, and play in a neighborhood.[7] Creative placemaking, with its focus on community engagement and quality of life, is a close cousin to the movement and ethos embodied by Jacobs and other progressive planners and placemakers.

Today, creative placemaking comes in many flavors, from efforts to invest in cultural amenities in order to make a municipality attractive to the kind of workforce that boosts an area's economic vitality (in the vein of Richard Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class*[8]) to artist-driven social projects that leverage the latent creative assets in an impoverished neighborhood to transform both its physical and social fabric (like Rick Lowe's Project Row Houses in Houston's Third Ward[9] and Theaster Gates' work in creative entrepreneurship and social service on the south side of Chicago[10]). Despite this diversity of contexts and approaches, in a scan of the literature we found that the goals of most creative placemaking projects fall into three broad categories: to contribute to the economic vitality of a community; to foster greater livability and vibrancy in a community; and to build a community's social capital and civic connection. (Because the intended scale of impact in creative placemaking projects can range from the hyper-local to an entire city or region, we use "community" here as a catch-all to refer to everything from a particular block in a neighborhood to an entire metro area.)

In recent years, through initiatives like the National Endowment for the Arts' "Our Town" program, the Kresge Foundation's placemaking-focused Arts & Culture Program, and ArtPlace, a collaboration of a number of national funders, federal agencies and financial institutions, tens of millions of dollars have been directed to creative placemaking projects in all 50 states and U.S. territories. That investment has naturally led many of these funders, and others in the field, to ask important questions about how to assess the impact of their investments and about which creative placemaking strategies and practices are most effective in contributing to a project's—and thereby, a community's—success.

In the early years of these initiatives, the major funders in the field—particularly the NEA and ArtPlace—focused their assessment efforts on developing indicators

systems: frameworks for bringing together a variety of data points that are related to key creative placemaking outcomes and tracking them over time to gauge how outcomes are changing. For instance, the NEA developed a set of "Arts & Livability Indicators" [11] that include measures of Resident Attachment to Community (such as length of residence and election turnout rates); Quality of Life (such as commute time and crime rates); Arts & Cultural Activity (such as the number of arts, culture, and humanities nonprofits); and Economic Conditions (such as unemployment rate and income diversity). In developing these indicators, the NEA made a deliberate decision to focus on measures for which there are national data available, typically from sources like the U.S. Census or the Bureau of Economic Analysis, and which can be tracked at a relatively local level, such as ZIP code or Census tract, so that individual creative placemaking projects wouldn't be burdened with collecting new data and so outcomes in one community could easily be compared to those in another.

These indicators systems began to provide concrete, quantitative ways to track the broad outcomes that have been theorized to stem from individual creative placemaking projects. But the indicators approach also came under criticism from some observers, including Ann Markusen [12] (a co-author of the NEA's defining 2010 paper) and Ian David Moss [13] (an advisor to this study). One objection was that, because data for the indicators is usually collected on a relatively broad geographic level as well as a broad, somewhat abstract conceptual level (based on hard-to-define notions like economic vitality, vibrancy, and livability), it's virtually impossible to connect any given creative placemaking project with observed change (or lack of change) in the indicators. Another concern was that defining the indicators at such a broad, conceptual level failed to respond to each creative placemaking project's unique goals, vision, and starting point. Moss argued that there was

> essentially no mechanism for connecting the Endowment's investments in Our Town projects to the indicators one sees. A project could be entirely successful on its own terms but fail to move the needle in a meaningful way in its city or neighborhood. Or it could be caught up in a wave of transformation sweeping the entire community, and wrongly attribute that wave to its own efforts. There's simply no way for us to tell. [14]

More importantly from our perspective, the indicators frameworks shed little light on *how* and *why* creative placemaking projects worked or didn't. They were able to demonstrate, for example, that a neighborhood or city experienced an uptick in certain quality-of-life measures during the same period as a creative placemaking project, but they didn't tell us what it was, exactly, about the project that contributed to that change—and therefore couldn't quite help us apply the lessons learned from one project to other efforts in the future.

In our view, the indicators systems also often unintentionally favored economic vitality and livability over outcomes related to building a community's social capital, in large part because there is little or no national, regularly collected data on levels of empowerment, self-efficacy, social bonding, or social bridging—concepts which may be more subjective than economic indicators but are central goals of many creative placemaking efforts and are widely considered critical components of the social health of a place. As a result, some practitioners argued that the indicators-based approach to measuring the impact of creative placemaking could privilege projects that are economically beneficial but may actually diminish the social capital of a community and its members—for instance, by highlighting the economic impact of creative placemaking investments without reckoning with unintended consequences like gentrification on those who might be displaced because of rising property values. This follows in part from the fact that indicators systems looked at the outcomes of creative placemaking on the place in aggregate, rather than exploring their distributional effects on the individuals whose lives are affected by the placemaking project.

The indicators systems often unintentionally favored economic vitality and livability over outcomes related to building a community's social capital.

In recent years, partly in response to these critiques of the indicators approach, many national funders have begun investing in a variety of ways to explore and understand the outcomes of creative placemaking projects and to connect that understanding to practice in an ongoing way. ArtPlace, in particular, has embraced a research philosophy that emphasizes project-specific measurement and creating value for practitioners—in marked contrast to its earlier emphasis on indicators. "Inherent in the breadth of practices that make up creative placemaking is the fact that success looks different for every project depending on its local context [and]

stated goals," ArtPlace wrote. "Rather than attempt to develop universal systems to quantify projects, we instead simply ask 'what is it you are trying to do, and how are you going to know whether you have done it?'" [15] (To some degree, this mirrors the current state of measurement and outcomes assessment in the broader cultural field, where funders and individual organizations use a wide range of tools, some standardized, some project-specific, to understand the myriad ways that cultural participation and engagement contribute to a wide variety of individual, social, and communal benefits.) As a result, there's a growing body of project-specific studies that examine, in a rigorous and multi-faceted way, the effects that individual creative placemaking projects have had on the people and places involved and the mechanisms by which they bring about change.

For instance, the Porch Light Program, a collaboration between the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program and the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services, which engages community residents with mental health or substance abuse challenges in the creation of public murals, engaged researchers at the Yale School of Medicine to carry out an evaluation of the program's impact on both the communities involved and the individual participants in the program. The Porch Light evaluation [16] was guided by a project-specific theory of change (it posits that public murals can reduce the risk for mental health or substance abuse problems). By collecting primary data from the actual people whose lives are meant to be affected, and doing so in a highly local, project-specific context, the researchers were able not only to connect Porch Light Project activities to the outcomes of interest, but also to draw out plausible mechanisms for how such a project brings about those benefits. Their work holds important implications for the broader fields of creative placemaking and public health.

The present evaluation is a useful working illustration of what can and can't be learned from different measurement approaches.

The present evaluation of permanent Levitt venues and the free music programming they offer makes use of both of these measurement strategies, using the NEA's Arts & Livability Indicators framework to look at the change in key outcomes in each Levitt community over time, and, in parallel, investing in multi-modal primary research among residents and concertgoers to take a deeper look at two Levitt venues and their surrounding neighborhoods. We hope that the resulting picture represents a valuable contribution to the

international body of work about the impact of individual creative placemaking projects, especially those that include free, outdoor music programming as a key ingredient. This report is also a useful working illustration of what can and can't be learned from different measurement approaches.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

In 2013, the Levitt Foundation—a Los Angeles-based private foundation that empowers communities to transform neglected public spaces into community destinations through free, live music with the creation of both permanent Levitt venues and pop-up Levitt concert sites—commissioned a study to better understand and document the impact that the permanent Levitt venues have on the individuals who attend them, on the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located, and on the cities as a whole. The Foundation viewed the study as an opportunity to test its theory of change about the outcomes assumed to result from the existence of, and the programming provided by, each permanent venue, as well as a chance to explore *how* the venues bring about these changes, whether there are any unintended consequences of the Levitt model, and what the Foundation and local organizations could be doing to fully realize their intended social impact. Like the broader creative placemaking field, the Levitt Foundation was interested both in mining existing national data sources to compare the aggregate impact across Levitt communities and in being able to contextualize the unique situation and contribution of the venues through new research with people "on the ground" in those communities.

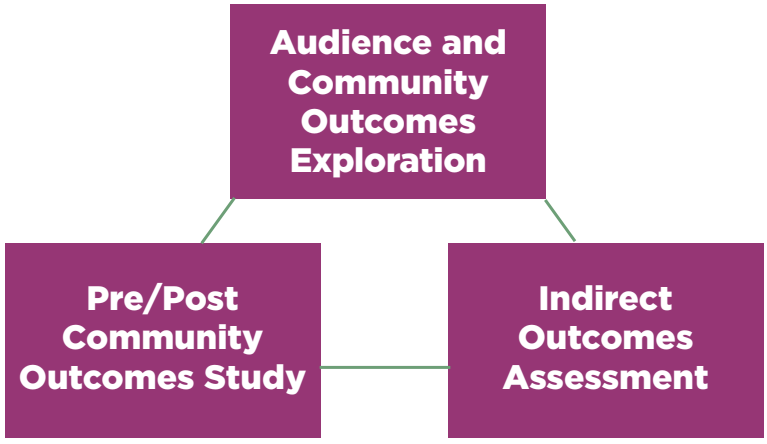
The Levitt Foundation engaged a joint team comprised of Slover Linett Audience Research, a social research firm for the arts, culture, and informal learning sectors, and Dr. Joanna Woronkowicz, a cultural policy scholar and faculty member at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs, to design and administer the study. The team also included a thoughtful group of advisors: Roberto Bedoya (Cultural Affairs Manager, City of Oakland), Anne Gadwa Nicodemus (Principal, Metris Arts Consulting), Ian David Moss (Founder and CEO, Createquity), and Michael Rushton (Professor, School of Environmental and Public Affairs, Indiana University). The study consists of three independent components: an Indirect Outcomes Assessment, an Audience and Community Outcomes Exploration, and a Pre/Post Community Outcomes Study. Together, the three components are

designed to paint a multi-dimensional picture of the impact of permanent Levitt music venues, with each study examining that impact from a different perspective (see Figure 1).

This report includes summaries of two of those components: In her section, "Levitt Music Venues and Neighborhood Change: Reflections on a Creative Placemaking Indicators Analysis," Dr. Woronkowicz reflects on the Indirect Outcomes Assessment she conducted, in which she analyzed a variety of existing or "secondary" data to measure the indirect or leveraged outcomes of the Levitt venues in five cities, using the NEA's VALI framework as a model. She shares reflections on that analysis starting on page 25. Then, in "Levitt Venues in Memphis and Pasadena: An Audience and Community Outcomes Study," we summarize the Slover Linett-led Audience and Community Outcomes Exploration, in which we used a mix of qualitative and quantitative primary research methods to explore the effects of the Levitt venues "on the ground" in those communities, and to understand the mechanisms by which the venues and free programming may be generating those effects at both the individual and community levels.

The third component, the Pre/Post Community Outcomes Study, also led by Slover Linett, takes advantage of the fact that a new permanent Levitt venue will open in Denver in 2017, allowing us to document the changes in the surrounding community from before the venue existed to after it is up and running. We completed an initial wave of fieldwork in Denver in the summer of 2013 to establish a pre-Levitt baseline, and we will return in the summer of 2018 to see what has changed. The results of that study will be released in early 2019.

FIGURE 1



This three-part study is guided by a detailed *theory of change*, or logic model, that the Levitt Foundation developed in 2013 for its permanent venue program (see page 61). At the **community level**, a Levitt venue is expected to immediately increase the public use and liveliness of the space, make high-quality live music more accessible across the community, and increase a community's appreciation and support of the musicians and artists who perform at the venues and of the organizations and vendors who are invited to exhibit or sell their goods and services during the concerts. Over time, the Levitt venue and its programming are also expected to transform the space into a community gathering place and a citywide destination, both during and outside of the free concerts, and to enhance the community's perceptions of the space. At the **individual concertgoer level**, Levitt concerts are intended to immediately provide people with shared experiences that make them feel welcomed and valued; that increase social interactions both within and across social networks; that invite active, informal, and social participation; and that help them share in the enjoyment of live music. Over time, it is hoped that these experiences will help concertgoers feel socially enriched and personally inspired; feel more connected to their community and enhance their sense of neighborliness and well-being; and become more interested in attending the arts and more aware of community resources that could be of value to them. Together, these community- and individual-level outcomes are theorized to contribute to a host of positive impacts at the **aggregate or system level**, including safer, cleaner public spaces; additional investment in public space; increased community engagement; increased arts participation; and greater social integration across demographic boundaries. The net result of all this, according to Levitt's theory of change, is more livable cities, stronger local economies, better quality of life, increased community resilience and attachment, and greater support for the arts. That's an ambitious vision, of course, and part of the purpose of this set of studies is to treat this theory of change as *theory*: as a set of hypotheses to scrutinize through empirical research.

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LEVITT MUSIC VENUES AND NEIGHBORHOOD CHANGE: REFLECTIONS ON A CREATIVE PLACEMAKING INDICATORS ANALYSIS

Joanna Woronkowicz, Ph.D. | Indiana University

This section by Dr. Woronkowicz offers a summary of her recent indicators-based analysis of neighborhood change in five Levitt communities. That analysis resulted in an internal report to the Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation and a peer-reviewed article in the Journal of Planning Education and Research titled "Art-Making or Place-Making? The Relationship between Open-Air Performance Venues and Neighborhood Change" (2015). The journal article is available as a companion to this white paper.

I conducted a study of the indirect impacts of permanent Levitt music venues using indicators constructed from data on neighborhoods with Levitt pavilions, all of which opened between 2003 and 2011 and are located in Arlington, Texas; Bethlehem, Pa.; Los Angeles; Memphis; and Pasadena, Calif. In the study, I attempted to measure economic and demographic change in neighborhoods with Levitt pavilions from before to after a pavilion was built by observing changes in indicators for each of five Levitt pavilion neighborhoods, in hopes of identifying trends by comparing the neighborhoods both to their surrounding counties and to each other.

This study serves as a test case or model for using descriptive indicators methods to assess creative placemaking outcomes, particularly the kinds of neighborhood livability effects proposed by the National Endowment for the Arts in the Validating Arts and Livability Indicators (VALI) study (NEA 2014). Broadly speaking, indicators that measure those effects fall into four categories: residents' attachment to the community; quality of life; arts & cultural activity; and economic conditions. Many of the indicators used in this study are taken directly from the NEA VALI study. Some of the NEA VALI indicators are slightly modified or for reasons pertaining to data availability, such as arts & cultural activity, are not included. Additional indicators that are present in other neighborhood change studies are also included (see Figure 2).

This study uses data from the 1990 and 2000 Decennial Censuses and the 2007–2011 American Community Survey 5-year file in order to analyze changes in neighborhoods with Levitt pavilions from 1990 to 2000 and 2000 to 2011. Further data for each neighborhood's host county are presented in this study in order to provide regional context for observed indicator changes. This study also uses de-

mographic data (i.e. population, age, ethnicity) to illustrate other changes in Levitt neighborhoods.

The methodology for defining each Levitt venue neighborhood is in accordance with neighborhood change literature, which emphasizes the use of "social mapping" in choosing neighborhood boundaries. The method used to define Levitt neighborhood boundaries takes into account both the spatial and social dimensions of a neighborhood and assures consistency of boundary selection. Under the assumption that each local Levitt executive director is knowledgeable about their venue's social environment, each director first delineated the boundaries of the venue's neighborhood based on their understanding of its perceived impact on residents, audiences, and businesses in the vicinity, essentially neighborhood boundaries were based on the economic and social reach each director believed a Levitt venue has. Next, director-delineated boundaries were matched to a map of Census tracts. A tract was included if it overlapped entirely or partially with the director-delineated boundary of the neighborhood.

By analyzing national data on a local level to assess the changes in the NEA VALI categories that have taken place in neighborhoods during the period in which the Levitt venues were founded—and by doing so in the broader context of this mixed-methods research study commissioned by Levitt, which included the primary audience research described elsewhere in this white paper—I hoped to shed additional light on the value of a descriptive indicators-based approach to creative placemaking impact research.

Even within these broad categories, some indicators pointed toward improvements, and others pointed in the opposite direction.

The news about that value is mixed at best. I learned that indicator trends varied widely across the five Levitt neighborhoods in the study. Some neighborhoods saw improvements related to residents' attachment to community, while others did not. The same was true for quality of life and economic conditions. Even within these broad categories, some indicators pointed toward improvements, and others pointed in the opposite direction. After careful analysis, I concluded three things: First, that many of the indirect impacts of Levitt pavilions are probably largely dependent on the unique neighborhood context and other conditions that exist prior to the introduction of the Levitt venue. Second, that that context and those conditions can't be understood through

FIGURE 2

INDICATORS	INTERPRETATION	NOTES
Resident Attachment to Community		
Proportion of single-unit structures	"More single-family housing units might indicate that the community provides more opportunities for people to own homes" (NEA 2014, p. 58).	N/A
Proportion of population moved in last 5 years from different county/state*	"A higher proportion of [migration], or an increase in [migration] over time, is thought to suggest less attachment to that community" (NEA 2014, p. 27).	This indicator differs from the NEA VALI indicator "Median Length of Residence" in that it uses data that indicate whether the respondent lived in a different county/state five years ago, as opposed to when the respondent moved into his/her current residence. While ACS data include information on the latter, Decennial Census data do not, therefore the indicator was constructed in order to be able to compare across study years.
Percent of households renting	In contrast to the percent of owner-occupied units, higher levels of renter occupancy can be considered to reflect lower levels of neighborhood attachment (NEA 2014, p. 25).	N/A
Proportion of housing units vacant	"A greater proportion of residential vacancies may signal neighborhood distress, while a lower or decreasing vacancy rate is generally associated with improved quality of life and neighborhood stability" (NEA 2014, p. 74).	N/A
Quality of Life		
Median commute time	"Shorter commute times are often associated with increased quality of life" (NEA 2014, p. 69).	N/A
Proportion of adults over the age of 25 with college degrees***	Educational attainment is commonly used in quality of life indicators. See for example Ross and Willigen (1997). A higher proportion of residents with college degrees indicates a greater overall quality of life.	N/A
Proportion of population white***	Percent of population in one racial group can be used to measure neighborhood diversity. See for example Noonan (2013). A majority percentage of white residents indicates less diversity, thus a lower quality of life.	N/A
Proportion of families with children in the home***	Presence of children in a community is often perceived by residents as promoting a better environment for children. See for example Coulton et al. (1995). Presence of children also changes the demographic mix and contributes to diversity (Noonan 2013). A higher percentage of families with children in the home indicates a greater quality of life, particularly for children.	N/A

*Modified from NEA VALI study
**Included in NEA VALI study but not in this study
***Not included in NEA VALI study but used in this study

FIGURE 2 - CONTINUED

INDICATORS	INTERPRETATION	NOTES
Arts and Cultural Activity		
Median earnings of residents employed in arts-and-entertainment-related establishments**	"Increases in the indicator value may suggest an increase in the demand for arts and cultural activity" (NEA 2014, p. 79).	For small geographies, data used to construct this indicator are based on a very small sample of earnings, and therefore results in inaccurate estimates.
Arts, culture, and humanities nonprofits per 1,000 population**	"Arts, culture, and humanities nonprofits serve as venues for creative engagement, reflect demand and promote further activity. Thus, more such organizations per capita (higher values for this indicator) suggest greater levels of cultural activity" (NEA 2014, p. 84).	The NEA VALI study recommends using National Center for Charitable Statistics data to construct this indicator. NCCS data for Census tracts are not yet available, therefore the indicator is not used in this study.
Economic Conditions		
Median housing price (in 2011 USD)*	"An area with higher property values may reflect stronger economic conditions and suggest that the community is considered a desirable place in which to live" (NEA 2014, p. 89).	The NEA VALI study recommends using Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) data on loan amounts to construct this indictor. Since loan amounts often do not correlate with housing prices, Census data on housing values are more accurate and therefore used in the construction of this indicator.
Median household income (in 2011 USD)	"Higher median household income levels are associated with stronger economic conditions" (NEA 2014, p. 90).	N/A
Active business addresses**	"Higher or increasing values for this indicator are thought to reflect stronger economic conditions or higher levels of economic stability. In contrast, higher levels of business vacancy are associated with falling property values, deterioration of the physical condition of an area, and increased safety concerns" (NEA 2014, p. 92).	The NEA VALI study recommends using United States Postal Service (USPS) vacancy data to construct this indicator. This study does not use this indicator because of issues related to comparability of data between 2000 and 2011.
Unemployment rate	"Lower unemployment rates are associated with stronger economic conditions" (NEA 2014, p. 93).	N/A
Income diversity**	"The Gini coefficient (named after the statistician who developed it) is used to measure inequality or disparity in the distribution of something, most commonly to measure inequality of income or wealth. It ranges in value from 0 to 1. A value of 0 signifies complete equality (where everyone earns the exact same income) and a value of 1 signifies complete inequality (where one person earns all the income, and everyone else earns nothing)" (NEA 2014, p. 94-95).	Whether rental rates were above or below city averages may suggest the strength of the housing market (Noonan 2013; NEA 2014, p. 40).
Proportion of population within 150% of the poverty line***	This is one measure by which to measure poverty rates, which is a common indicator of neighborhood disadvantage (Noonan 2013; Coulton, Kofbin, and Su 1999).	N/A
Median gross rent***	Whether rental rates were above or below city averages may suggest the strength of the housing market (Noonan 2013; NEA 2014, p. 40).	N/A

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a descriptive analysis of existing data. And third, that for those reasons, using indicators to uniformly measure change without implementing a research design that explicitly accounts for differences between neighborhoods and the various goals of creative placemaking initiatives is probably not the most effective way of understanding the effects of creative placemaking outcomes.

A quick note about that finding. Null results are rarely published in the social sciences, yet determining what hypotheses and methods *don't* work is a precondition for progress in any domain. There is good conceptual and theoretical support for the indicators systems proposed by the NEA and others in the creative placemaking field. But my attempt to apply them in this "real world" case to assess a similarly structured arts intervention in five American communities, suggests that the descriptive indicators approach may not hold much practical value as a tool for measuring creative placemaking outcomes. That conclusion is of course limited to the specific interventions, places, data sets, and analytical methods involved in this particular study; other efforts to use indicators methods in different creative placemaking contexts and with a different analytical approach may prove more valuable. (For example, in my journal article, mentioned above [Woronkowicz 2015], I conducted a controlled analysis in order to take into account other confounding factors in addition to the standardized indicators, and I measured and averaged changes across the five Levitt neighborhoods. By contrast, the descriptive indicators approach used in the present study does not take into account other potential confounders and measures neighborhood changes *within* each Levitt neighborhood.) But this study adds weight to other concerns that have been raised about descriptive indicators-based approaches in creative placemaking research, including the reasonable objection that community development, placemaking, and placekeeping initiatives, no matter how comprehensive and large-scale they may be, are only one set of factors in a complex community environment, and while they may influence outcomes, their specific causal role in any observed demographic or economic change may be more difficult or impossible to assess.

Community development, placemaking, and placekeeping initiatives, no matter how comprehensive and large-scale they may be, are only one set of factors in a complex community environment.

In the current study, I found that the descriptive indicators approach failed to take into account the conditions that make one neighborhood different from another

before a Levitt Pavilion is built. Those conditions are critically important for understanding the changes that would have taken place anyway, absent the Levitt Pavilion. Take, for example, the changes we saw in the Arlington Levitt neighborhood: a rising proportion of young and educated residents and higher property values over the period studied, but also higher poverty rates. At first glance, it appears as if the Arlington Levitt neighborhood was undergoing gentrification, making it harder for current residents to afford living in the neighborhood. If so, this would be an example of precisely the unintended outcomes of creative placemaking that some observers have warned against. Yet without understanding the impact that the expansion of the University of Texas at Arlington campus had on this neighborhood, it is impossible to conclude with any certainty what the reasons for these changes may have been. These young and educated residents may be students, who are also more likely to fall under the federal poverty line based on their reported incomes but may nonetheless contribute economically and in other ways to the vitality of the neighborhood. Fully understanding a neighborhood's context, then, is key to understanding both the potential and actual impacts of a creative placemaking initiative.

Fully understanding a neighborhood's context is key to understanding both the potential and actual impacts of a creative placemaking initiative.

Furthermore, the practice of using a standard set of indicators, such as the set proposed by the NEA's VALI study, encourages comparisons between communities even when their starting points (or, statistically, their baseline metrics) may be very different. The purpose of presenting county-level data alongside data on specific Levitt neighborhoods in this study was to provide a basis for comparison that could be useful in interpreting scale differences among indicator changes. For example, if the rate at which the proportion of households renting in a Levitt neighborhood changed more or less than in the surrounding county, then one could deduce that neighborhood changes may have been a result of some type of localized effort (e.g., the creation of a Levitt Pavilion). The problem with this neighborhood/county comparison is that, even in cases where one knows both baselines, the interpretation of an indicator can still vary from one neighborhood to the next. For example, the increasing proportion of renters we found in the Arlington Levitt neighborhood may just be a reflection of the (positive) impact the university has made on the community by recruiting new students to the area—whereas an increase in the proportion of renters in another neighborhood may illustrate that residents are being priced out of purchasing

their own homes and must rent instead.

Indicators like those used here, which are limited to national data sources, also fail to measure certain neighborhood changes for which there is no consistent, national data available, such as the social and civic changes that may take place alongside a creative placemaking initiative. This is especially important when evaluating the impact of a Levitt Pavilion, whose goals include transforming and activating a neglected public space; contributing to the cohesiveness of the neighborhood and surrounding areas, as well as the city as a whole; and increasing social connectivity across demographic boundaries. Audiences at Levitt concerts, many of whom are residents of the neighborhood and surrounding areas, are interested not just in the economic impacts of a new performing arts venue, but also in how the pavilion can serve as a meeting place for them and their neighbors. Sharing arts experiences with neighbors can help bring a community together. Focusing on broader economic and demographic indicators and other "indirect outcomes" of the creative placemaking venture can cause us not only to miss these important, less tangible impacts but also to focus disproportionately on the changes that *can more easily* be measured, which may or may not be as important to community stakeholders themselves.

Finally, I found that using indicators to measure creative placemaking success is only as good as the data that are available to construct the underlying indicators. The attempt to gauge success across multiple regions relies on the ability to access *identical* data for each region for the same time period. In this study, I only used nationally representative data available on all neighborhoods in the U.S. between 1990 and 2011, a stricture which prevented me from using data sources that might have contributed usefully to the picture of neighborhood change. For example, crime statistics and data on schools are generally only available from local municipalities, which collect data in very different ways and are therefore not directly comparable; interpreting and comparing across the Levitt neighborhoods would have involved a fair amount of guesswork.

So this study further supports the caution that the field has recently expressed about relying solely on descriptive indicators approaches to measure the impacts of creative placemaking initiatives. I concur with the point made by Sarah Lee and Nicole Baltazar in their section of this white paper about the value of combining indicators-based analysis with "on the ground" data collection about outcomes

(intended and unintended) and to develop project-specific, context-specific measurement strategies to study each creative placemaking initiative. To get at how the economic and demographic landscape of neighborhoods intersects with the introduction of a Levitt Pavilion, more research of that kind—exemplified by the audience and community outcomes study discussed in the next section of this white paper—will be necessary.

Creative placemaking projects must have clearly articulated goals and objectives in order to be able to evaluate them and learn what has worked and what hasn't.

While this indicators study cautions the field against overusing indicators to evaluate creative placemaking initiatives, it also offers the Levitt Foundation valuable insight about how to assess the impact of its work: Levitt and other creative placemaking organizations and partnerships must clearly articulate their goals and objectives before undertaking each project, even if the framework is similar across communities, in order to be able to evaluate them and learn what has worked and what hasn't. Measuring the success of the Levitt Foundation's stated mission – *to empower communities to transform neglected outdoor spaces into welcoming destinations where the power of free, live music brings people together and invigorates community life* – would require multiple research approaches, including but not limited to economic and demographic analyses like this indicators study. Since each Levitt community has unique local characteristics, trends, and dynamics, each creative placemaking intervention begins from a different starting point and operates in a unique environment. So in order to more fully understand the changes that take place as a result of the introduction of a Levitt Pavilion, the organization will need to study the preexisting conditions of the pavilion neighborhood in detail before it begins to build. By understanding those conditions, Levitt and its local partners can tailor their specific goals for neighborhood development and community engagement, then measure the relevant factors to determine whether and in what ways those goals are being met. That work of customizing both the goals and the evaluation criteria of each creative placemaking project's evaluation will render the indicators approach used here—the selective analysis of existing national data sources to track and compare changes in disparate placemaking contexts—less useful, but it will also bring additional rigor and nuance to our understanding of the role of the arts and creativity in community change.

LEVITT VENUES IN MEMPHIS AND PASADENA: AUDIENCE AND COMMUNITY OUTCOMES STUDY

Sarah Lee and Nicole Baltazar, Ph.D. | Slover Linett

In this paper, we describe key findings and implications of the Audience and Community Outcomes Exploration, which was completed in late 2014. The goal of this component of the project was to use two existing permanent Levitt venues to study the outcomes that the Levitt Foundation has hypothesized to flow from these venues and their programming, with a particular emphasis on understanding the mechanisms by which they may generate those outcomes among individual concertgoers as well as the community at large. Rather than offering a comprehensive account of the impact of Levitt venues, we focus here on exploring some of the key outcomes that appear to stem from attending Levitt concerts and from the presence of a permanent Levitt venue in the community, and we discuss some of the means by which Levitt venues appear to bring about these outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

To design the Audience and Community Outcomes Exploration, we first selected two of the six established Levitt venues to be the focus of our investigation. We aimed to choose sites that differed with respect to region, type of municipality in which they were located, age of the venue, kind of programming offered, and the socioeconomic, demographic, and cultural profile of the community, and to prioritize those that reflect the current strategic direction of the Levitt Foundation regarding new permanent venues in development. We ultimately selected the Levitt Pavilion in Pasadena, California, and the Levitt Shell in Memphis, Tennessee (see "About the Permanent Levitt Venue Model," page 59). We conducted our field research in Pasadena in the summer of 2013 and in Memphis in the summer and fall of 2014.

In both locations, we used a mix of quantitative and qualitative audience research methods. To explore the experience of attending a Levitt concert from the perspective of individual concertgoers, the research team attended 3–4 concerts at each site, using **participant observation** and **in-context interviewing** to investigate the social, emotional, and physical experience of attending a concert and how attendees interact and participate during the concert. In total, we spoke with over 100 individuals across the two venues before, during, and after these concerts. We also developed a **quantitative survey** about the concert experience, which we administered in pencil-and-paper form at a sample of concerts

throughout each venue's summer season (8 in Pasadena, 11 in Memphis), using a random-intercept protocol to obtain a representative sample of concertgoers. We collected 387 completed surveys in Pasadena and 434 in Memphis, with a cooperation or response rate of 83% in Pasadena and 89% in Memphis. In addition, to understand the broader role that the Levitt venue plays in community life, we conducted **in-depth stakeholder interviews**, in person and by telephone, with elected officials, a variety of local business owners, social- and human-service providers, funders and philanthropists, other community and cultural leaders, and Levitt venue staff and board members of the local Friends of Levitt nonprofit organization. We interviewed 14 stakeholders in Pasadena and 18 in Memphis. And finally, we held two **community discussion groups** in each site, each of which included 8–9 residents representing a range of socio-demographic backgrounds and cultural/civic participation behaviors. The participants in those discussion groups were a mix of individuals who had attended a concert at the Levitt venue in their community and those who had not (some of the latter had not even heard of the venue) so that we could understand the role of the venue from the perspectives of both those who do and don't attend; roughly half of the participants had never been to a concert at a Levitt venue.

KEY FINDINGS

In their 2010 paper, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus describe creative placemaking as a process in which "partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city or region around arts and cultural activities."[17] There's a hybridity inherent in that definition: a recognition that the arts are both the central ingredient in a creative placemaking project *and* a conduit, catalyst, or *occasion* for activities and outcomes that extend far beyond the arts. Levitt venues offer a similarly hybrid experience: the music plays a vital and central role, but at the same time listening to the music becomes a background for social interaction, family time, reconnecting with oneself, and other positive experiences. This hybridity is not unique to Levitt venues, of course; over time and across cultures, the arts have often been experienced in a social context and valued as a social experience. But making this hybridity or duality

The arts are both the central ingredient in a creative placemaking project *and* a conduit, catalyst, or *occasion* for activities and outcomes that extend far beyond the arts.

explicit allows us to take an expansive look at the value and outcomes of the live music experience at Levitt venues. The quality of the experience is determined both by the intrinsic attributes of the musical performance itself *and* by how the music supports or advances the social context in which it is performed. At the Levitt venues in Pasadena and Memphis, a large majority of concertgoers told us that the music is a key factor in their decision to attend Levitt concerts, and similar numbers said the same about spending time with the people they care about (see Figure 3). At both venues, we observed concertgoers shifting their attention from the music to one another and back again repeatedly over the course of the performance. Said one individual whom we interviewed at a concert at the Levitt Shell in Memphis, "It's honestly fifty-fifty about the music and [about] our date. We can sit back here so that we're close enough to hear the music when we want to listen, but it's not so loud that we can't talk to each other." Among the performing arts, music seems to be particularly well-suited to this kind of dual experience; shifting one's attention back and forth at a theatrical production, for instance, would feel less natural, even in a correspondingly informal setting like an outdoor amphitheater. Yet social interaction during a concert is also unexpected in more formal, indoor music performances (think of a classical music concert in a symphony hall). So it appears that it's the confluence of the artistic form or discipline and the informality of the venue and setting that supports this hybrid experience. (The NEA also identified this kind of "richly textured arts experience" as a key feature of outdoor arts festivals.[18])

Beyond paying attention to the music, concertgoers engage in a variety of social and individual activities, with neither distracting from the other.

Beyond paying attention to the music, concertgoers engage in a variety of social and individual activities, including eating picnic dinners, talking to other concertgoers, dancing, and playing Frisbee or other recreational activities. The concerts and those typical park activities co-exist comfortably, with neither distracting from the other; for instance, we observed dog owners stopping by to check out the show midway through a dog walk, and groups of children playing on the lawn but also listening to the music. Even families with children too young to sit through a concert with fixed seating told us that they feel comfortable attending Levitt venues because of the casual, open space layout.

We frequently observed signs of a communal spirit at Levitt concerts, demonstrated through casual interactions between strangers and, even more so, bonding

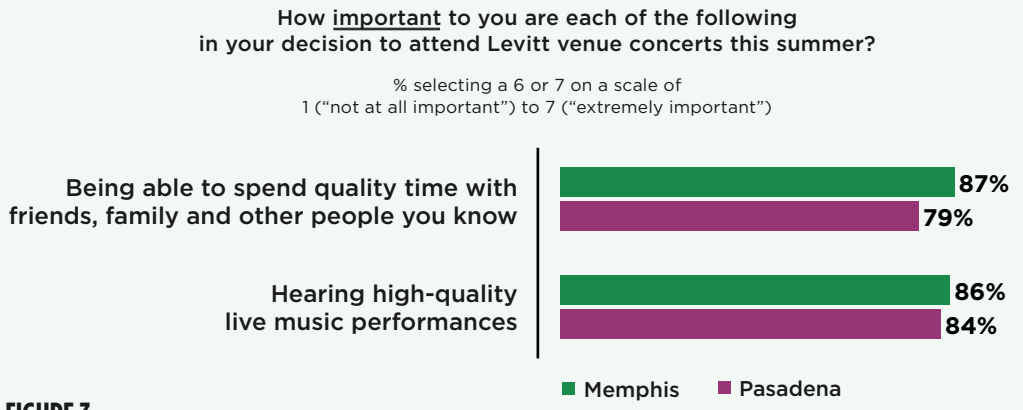


FIGURE 3

experiences within concertgoers' existing social networks. The hybridity of the experience appears to be a key condition and catalyst for these interactions. The music ensures that the experience is not merely a random coming together of people from different walks of life in a public park, but rather a shared, communal experience that diverse individuals have together, as a community (see Figure 4). Indeed, we found that over half of concertgoers feel connected to their local community when attending a Levitt concert. One Pasadena concertgoer described that connection in terms that, while at the outer range of the emotional impact we heard expressed in this study, demonstrate the ways some residents derive deep meaning from the Levitt experience: "I don't have a lot of family here and it is a nice, warm feeling to be there. I feel connected to other people there, and it feels like family." And the fact that the music doesn't require the rapt, focused attention that it might at a more traditional arts venue, or a different art form, allows genuine interactions to take place among concertgoers. "If I'm just attending something, there's no experience of community. If I go out to a play or a concert, I don't really talk to people I don't know, it's not culturally acceptable," said one community discussion group participant, drawing a contrast to her experiences at the Levitt Pavilion in Pasadena.

Being able to interact with the people *within* one's existing social network is an especially important part of the experience for concertgoers. Levitt venues provide opportunities for individuals who already know one another—family members, friends, neighbors, and colleagues—to interact on a regular basis, but in ways that are different from their usual encounters. Concertgoers can arrange to attend

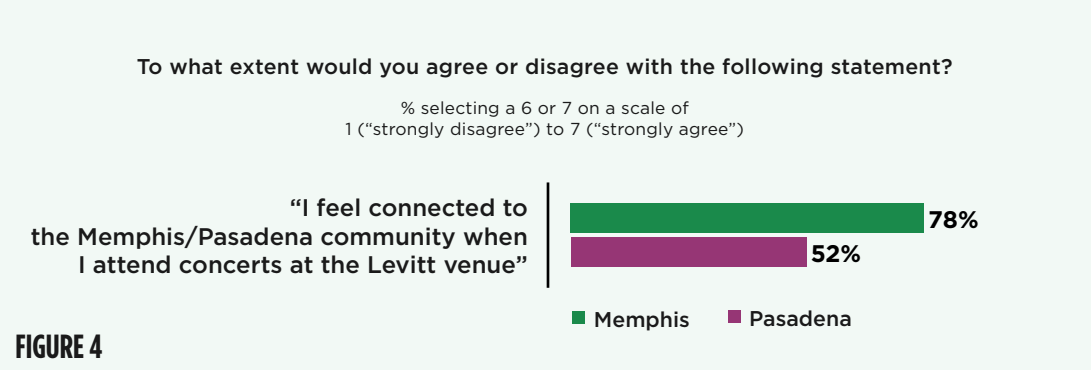


FIGURE 4

concerts with others, or they can simply show up and see who is there whom they already know. In both Pasadena and Memphis, we observed concertgoers engaging in both planned and unplanned social interactions—sometimes at the same time. For example, families or small groups of friends might attend together, then run into other groups that they know; small social groups develop into larger ones on the lawn. Many interviewees also described being introduced to people who were "one degree of separation" away within their social circles, and these new, Levitt-facilitated social connections sometimes turn into lasting relationships.

Sociologists see these moments as important in building "social capital," the value that is derived from existing within and being connected to a social network, which contributes to a host of positive economic, health, educational, and civic outcomes.[19] We noted two kinds of social capital being built at Levitt venues. The interactions we observed between individuals who already know each other can strengthen and deepen *bonding social capital,*[20] or the ties that connect individuals who are similar to one another on some key dimension or already part of a group. Bonding social capital is what enables people who don't know each other but who share one or more similarities to serve as a social safety net. We also observed interactions at both Levitt sites that help build *bridging social capital,*[21] or points of connection, understanding, and exchange across diverse social groups or communities. Levitt venues provide opportunities for "social friction," a term coined by urban sociologist Richard Sennett to describe the bringing together of different people in a de-

Levitt venues provide opportunities for "social friction," the bringing together of different people in a defined space in ways that support the formation of both bonding and bridging social capital.

fined space in ways that support the formation of both kinds of social capital. We found that concertgoers frequently have friendly interactions with strangers. For example, while seated next to one another or waiting in line at the food trucks or vendor booths, concertgoers from different social groups would often strike up conversations about the music, the weather, and other easy-to-relate-to topics. Concertgoers told us that this type of friendly exchange is more common at Levitt venues than elsewhere in their communities, and many deeply appreciate it and view it as an integral part of the experience that the Levitt venue offers. The connections that happen across social groups are, perhaps inevitably, more fleeting than the bonds strengthened *within* social networks (see Figure 5). Said one Memphis discussion group participant, "At [Levitt] concerts, you can have general conversations with people. It starts a mini-friendship; that's my buddy for the night. And after the concert, you go your separate ways." But such interactions are not the only way that bridging capital can be built; as we discuss below, the environment at Levitt venues plays an important role in bringing diverse people together in a democratic, "level" place.

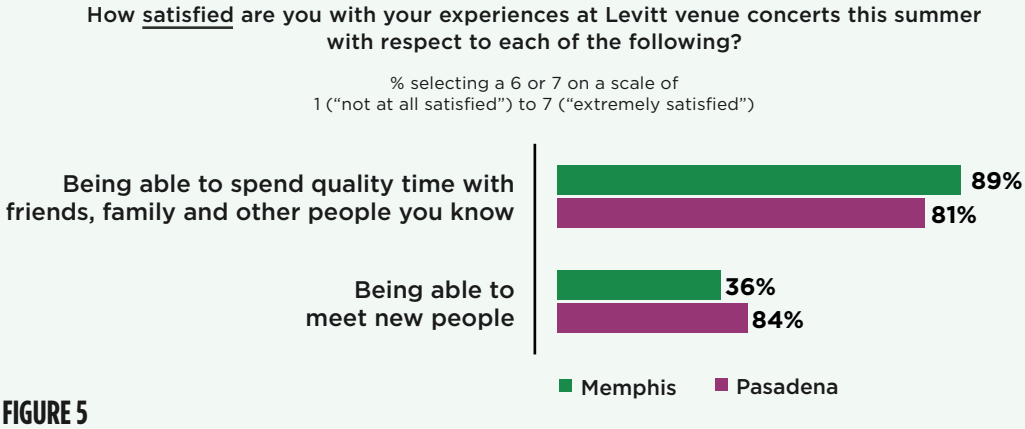


FIGURE 5

The casual and accessible atmosphere at Levitt venues reinforces these dynamics, making it more possible for the music to support social connection and interaction, and further distinguishing Levitt concerts from other kinds of arts experiences. From our observations at the venues and conversations with concertgoers, we identified distinct attributes that foster that atmosphere. Each venue is open-air, located in a public park or other public site, which makes it feel accessible to all community members. Concertgoers feel a palpable sense of "all are welcome,"

heightened by the fact that there are literally no doors or walls to keep some inside the venue and others outside of it. Some concertgoers likened the experience to "being in nature," saying that they are re-energized and recharged after spending time outdoors at Levitt concerts. And the park setting helps concertgoers feel comfortable stopping by casually, without necessarily committing to the full evening's program—*or* to make a full night of it by bringing a picnic, enjoying the onsite food and beverage vendors, or going out to nearby restaurants before or after the concert.

FIGURE 6	MEMPHIS		PASADENA	
	Study population	U.S. Census data (for the Memphis Metro Area, 2014)	Study population	U.S. Census data (for the Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim Metro Area, 2014)
Average age:				
	40 years	-	44 years	-
Average annual household income:				
	$80,860	$47,647	$82,370	$60,337
Do you consider yourself to be Hispanic or Latino?				
Yes	4%	5%	30%	45%
What category or categories best describe your race?				
White	82%	46%	50%	31%
African-American or Black	13%	46%	18%	7%
Asian	3%	2%	11%	15%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%	<1%	4%	<1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1%	<1%	3%	<1%
Other	3%	2%	23%	2%

The demographics of the Levitt audiences we surveyed in Pasadena and Memphis suggest a level of diversity, along multiple dimensions (see Figure 6), that is rarely found in more formal performing arts settings.[22] The audiences at both venues come from all points along the income distribution, and concertgoers are as likely to have a household income of under $25,000 per year as they are to earn over

$150,000. Concerts also attract an age-diverse audience. The intergenerational appeal of Levitt concerts is particularly pronounced, and parents (as well as those without children at home) were enthusiastic about the family-friendliness of Levitt venues (see Figure 7), which stems from both the space ("My kids have freedom to move around," said one Memphis concertgoer) and the programming (a stakeholder in Memphis told us, "They do a really great job of choosing acts that are very talented and that appeal to a widespread range of people. The music is enjoyable for all ages without alienating or offending anyone").

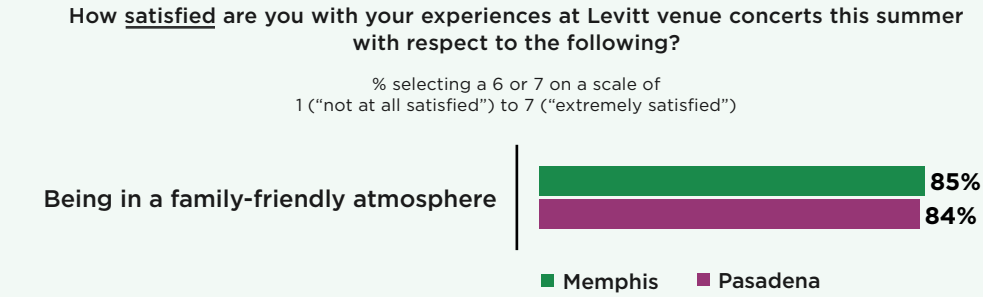


FIGURE 7

In Pasadena, the audience was also representative of the broader population of the city in terms of race and ethnicity (see, again, Figure 6). That picture was more mixed in Memphis: the audience at the Levitt Shell is less diverse than the city overall, with African-Americans underrepresented. The city of Memphis as a whole is just over 60% black, though the neighborhood immediately surrounding Levitt Shell and Overton Park is nearly 60% white. (Levitt Shell may, however, still be more diverse than other popular leisure-time activities in the city, a sentiment that some stakeholders and concertgoers expressed. One concertgoer said, "This place is the only thing like it in Memphis. A place where people can come together—all races, creeds, and kinds.") Memphis is, of course, a city with a long history of residential segregation and one in which race and ethnicity have been socially and politically charged for generations—and those divisions can be felt when it comes to who may feel welcome in public space. In our view, this points to the importance of being attentive to the underlying social geography of a place when selecting a site for a creative placemaking project, especially if that project's goals include connecting people across social divides.

Nevertheless, concertgoers in both cities feel that the audiences for Levitt venues are more diverse than the groups they encounter around other leisure-time activities they participate in, especially arts-based activities, in their cities and find this a welcome reinforcement of their sense of community. A discussion group participant in Memphis told us, "It [Levitt Shell] feels inclusive, and when you are doing something that feels inclusive, it feels more wholesome, it feels more enriching. It makes the experience more comfortable for me."

The fact that all concerts have an open lawn setting and free admission is another critical attribute of the Levitt model (see Figure 8). It engenders a "leveling" effect that makes concertgoers feel a sense of equality with their fellow audience members, and a sense that socioeconomic differences fade away while enjoying a Levitt concert. This is not simply because ticket price isn't a barrier to entry—though the concertgoers we spoke with do appreciate that free admission explicitly makes the concert accessible to those from all points along the income distribution. The fact that "good seats" are available to anyone, not just those who can afford them, and that everyone can sit where they like is critical to giving concertgoers equal access to the same quality of experience. Said one stakeholder in Pasadena, "You may have the mayor or a homeless guy sitting next to you—everybody is there enjoying the evening," a comment that suggests that bridging social capital can be created through mechanisms other than overt interactions between

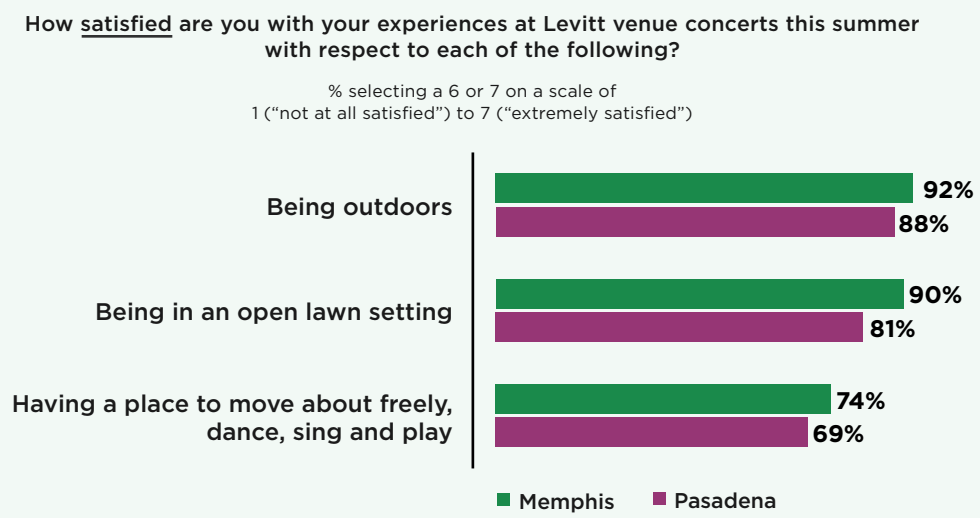


FIGURE 8

strangers. The pick-your-seat approach also means that, excepting practical considerations like how close to the start time they arrive, concertgoers feel a sense of autonomy in choosing the experience that *they* want to have—whether to be close or far from the stage, whether to dance, toss a Frisbee, chat with friends or just sit and listen to the music.

Bridging social capital can be created through mechanisms other than overt interactions between strangers.

The low barriers to entry, combined with the positive experiences that so many have, make it possible for people to make Levitt concerts a regular feature of their cultural and entertainment landscape during each venue's concert season. Concertgoers can easily drop by a Levitt concert without advance planning and can come and go as they please. Over half of all concertgoers at both venues report that they attend at least 2–3 concerts each summer (see Figure 9). This gives rise to a virtuous cycle: concertgoers come back regularly, which increases their chances of re-connecting with those they already know or meeting a stranger, which makes them feel an even greater sense of belonging in the community life found at the venues, which may ultimately make them want to come back again.

Part of what makes Levitt concerts such a "repeatable" experience, moreover, is that they are almost universally expected to feature high-quality music. Audiences have developed a strong sense of trust in the programming decisions that Levitt venues make. They know that the performers booked by Levitt venues will be critically acclaimed and will meet high standards of quality, whether they are local musicians or artists of national stature. While the music is a central reason that people attend, many of those we spoke with choose to attend irrespective of the *particular* artists performing (a discussion group participant in Pasadena commented that, "for the most part, there are [musicians] playing there that you don't really know; you stop because it's a fun environment"). They have come to view Levitt as a trusted curator who can expose them to new music genres and unfamiliar artists in a way that they feel sure to enjoy. This may suggest that the success of Levitt venues hinges not just on creating welcoming, appealing public spaces but also on being astute artistic programmers who know what will appeal to a diverse cross-section of their communities.

Many people choose to attend irrespective of the *particular* artists performing.

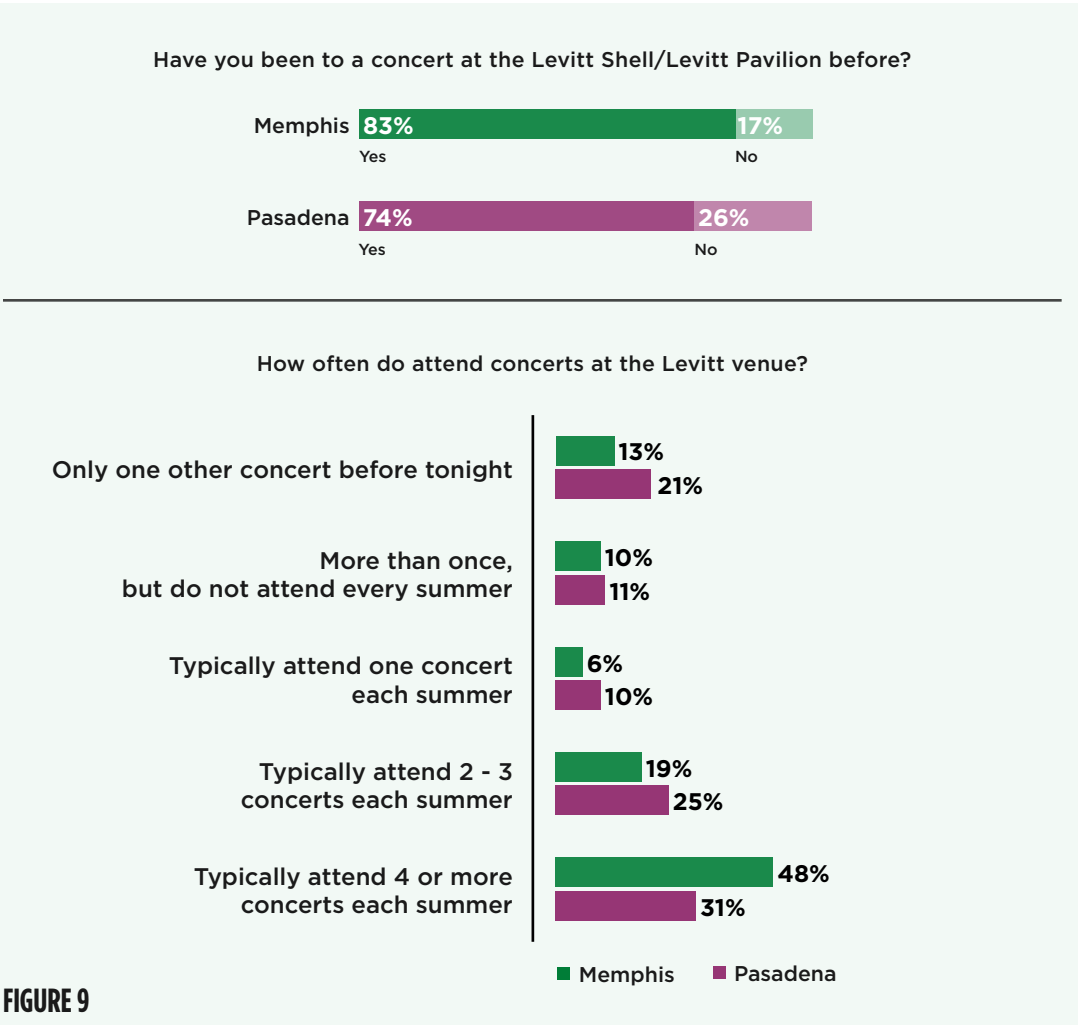


FIGURE 9

Turning from the outcomes of the concert experience on individual concertgoers to the broader, community-wide impact of the venues, we learned that the presence of Levitt venues in each of these cities has played, and continues to play, an important role in broader physical and economic revitalization efforts in the immediate neighborhood and surrounding areas. In both Pasadena and Memphis, the local Friends of Levitt nonprofit organization, in partnership with the city government and the Levitt Foundation, took an existing but run-down WPA-era band shell, restored it physically, and reactivated it programmatically. In Memphis, the Overton Park band shell was on the verge of being razed, and so the Levitt efforts literally saved it from destruction. In both cities, local stakeholders with whom we

spoke repeatedly pointed to ways that the physical restoration of the band shells contributed to reinvestment in and revitalization of the park in which the venues are located. Memorial Park in Pasadena had been relatively inactive and, in the words of one local stakeholder, "the park was ignored, the City didn't spend money on it." But the same interviewee said that community members now see the park itself as worthy of attention and investment because of the Levitt venue, with people making use of the venue and surrounding parkland outside of Levitt programming: "It [Levitt Pavilion] enhances the positive image [of the park]. It is a beautiful venue, and when they are not there for the [concert] series, people have respect for the park and they maintain the park." Overton Park, in Memphis, was similarly under-maintained and in disuse according to a stakeholder there: "In the days before the Shell was restored by Levitt, the park was pretty blighted. There was lots of litter, and fewer people used the park even to go jogging or walk around. There was lots of suspicious activity: crime, drugs, solicitation." This points to a particularly important shift that these restoration efforts brought about: an improvement in community members' *perceptions* of the safety of the parks and the safety of the surrounding neighborhood. One Pasadena stakeholder told us that "the park used to be really scary and not family-friendly." Yet now, concertgoers almost unanimously report feeling safe at each venue, attesting to the changed way they view the area (see Figure 10).

An improvement in community members' *perceptions* of the safety of the parks and the safety of the surrounding neighborhood.

In Memphis, the restoration of the Overton Park band shell offered an additional benefit to the community, injecting renewed civic pride and bringing back to life a historically significant gathering place. One stakeholder told us how the venue, once called Overton Park Shell, was a critical site in the musical history of Memphis: "It's a cultural icon here in Memphis. People remember it as the original shell for operettas, symphonies. People in the '70s heard every rock group that ever was. Elvis played there before he was famous. You can't measure the impact of that on the city of Memphis." It also had a rich tradition of showcasing African-American performers from Memphis and beyond. Given that music and musical culture are deeply intertwined with Memphis' identity and Memphians' sense of place, saving and restoring the Overton shell helped preserve an important part of the culture. More broadly, and

More broadly, Levitt venues contribute to community residents' "pride of place."

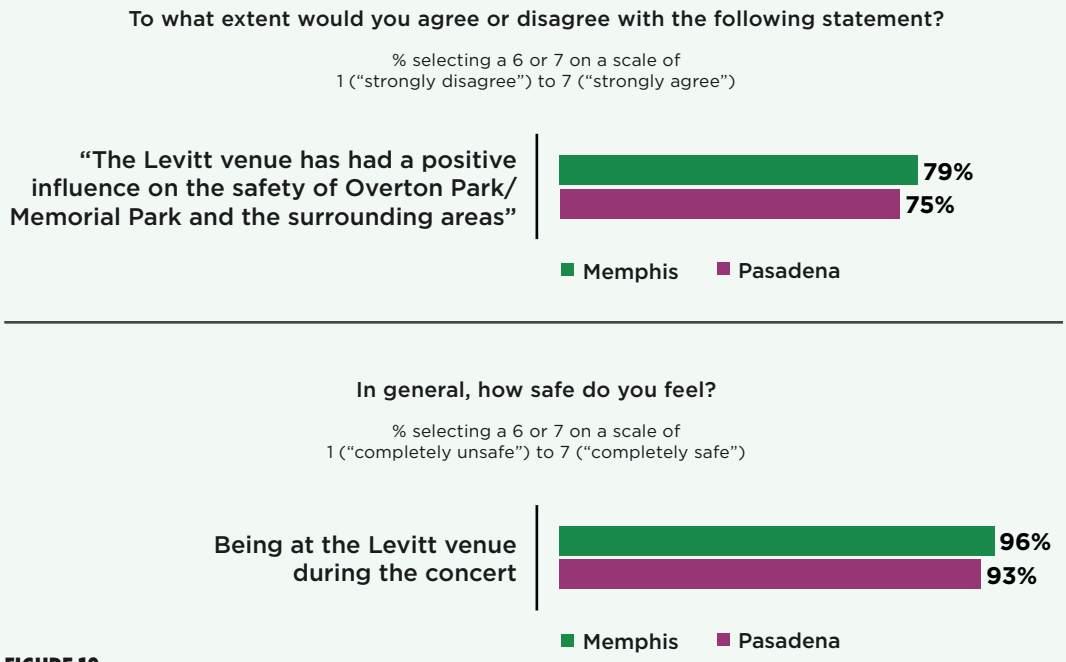


FIGURE 10

in both communities, Levitt venues contribute to community residents' "pride of place," becoming a critical pillar in each city's cultural landscape and an ongoing citywide destination. Said one Pasadena stakeholder, "[It's] part of community pride. I would put Levitt Pavilion on a list of things that make Pasadena. It would be on the 10 best things [about the city]."

The Levitt venues also support revitalization of the area by spurring economic activity in the neighborhood around the venue. Concertgoers patronize local businesses, including bars, restaurants, and retail outlets, before and after the show (see Figure 11); this has the potential to both keep economic activity in the neighborhood (i.e., spending by local residents who might have otherwise left the neighborhood for the evening) and draw incremental spending to the area (by those who travel to the neighborhood for a Levitt concert). In the words of one Pasadena stakeholder, "People go to dinner before or after. Or they'll go have some yogurt, or they'll go do a little shopping." We heard the same sentiment in Memphis, with one business owner telling us, "The [restoration of the] Levitt Shell has had a really positive impact on this cafe. Last week, we got slammed right be-

fore the concert and also got a little boost in customers coming after the show.... For area restaurants, the Shell is a great thing." The Levitt venues also invite local food and beverage vendors, including food trucks, and artisans to set up stands at the concerts, providing a direct way for local businesses to benefit from concert activity. While these data points don't provide a rigorous assessment of the economic impact of the venues (and, as many economists and other social scientists have pointed out, there are reasons to be skeptical of the ways economic impact analysis is conducted in the arts[23]), they do point to the additional economic activity that coincides with attending a Levitt concert.

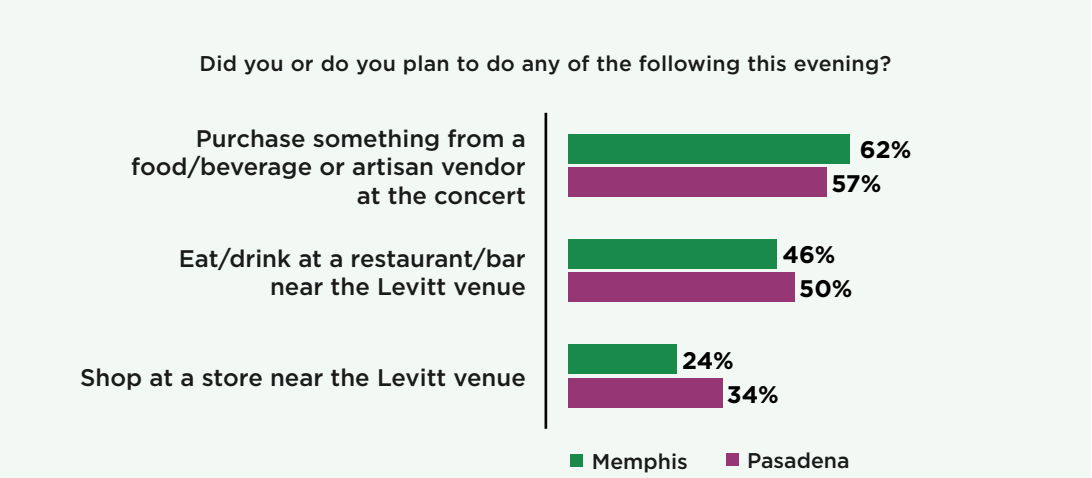


FIGURE 11

In both communities, the Levitt venues are perceived to have had an important catalytic and contributory role in the broader revitalization of the neighborhoods beyond the park. Referring to a nearby commercial zone, one Memphis stakeholder said, "I think the revitalization of Overton Square after the revitalization of the Levitt Shell is not accidental. I think the Shell was a positive influence on getting momentum behind what's happening in Overton Square. For thirty years, [Overton Square] was dead and it is completely revitalized at this point." However, in neither case was the venue solely responsible for that shift. In Pasadena, the downtown area was already in the midst of a transformation, and the Levitt venue played an important role in contributing to the overall success of that transformation. One stakeholder called Pasadena's Levitt Pavilion "the last key missing part, tipping the scale" of the revitalization of downtown. In Memphis, saving the Over-

ton Park band shell from being razed and relaunching it as the Levitt Shell added momentum to the revitalization of Overton Park and the surrounding neighborhood of Overton Square, both coinciding with a variety of local developments and sparking additional investments.

This contributory role is consistent with the way that the Levitt Foundation identifies potential communities to support. As referenced in its theory of change, in addition to looking at a community's *need* (whether it has a substantial neglected or underutilized public space, and whether it lacks accessible arts and cultural offerings), the Levitt Foundation also considers whether a community is *ready* for such an investment: is there existing commitment and support from local leadership and residents to improve a public space and the surrounding area? In both Memphis and Pasadena, that dual picture of need and readiness meant that there was support not just for the Levitt project but also actual or latent support for parallel development and revitalization activities with similar goals.

Levitt venues also appear to help strengthen the civic fabric of the communities in which they're located by giving a platform to local nonprofit organizations and other local entities, though the emphasis on these activities varies from venue to venue. In both Pasadena and Memphis, local nonprofits and community partners are invited to attend concerts and set up booths, enabling them to be present at concerts in order to talk with community members and raise awareness of their initiatives and resources for the community. A Pasadena nonprofit leader said that Levitt concerts provide "a great opportunity....to have our staff out there connecting with the youth, to have the opportunity to be there and educate the public on energy and water conservation." In other cases, nonprofits host their own events in Levitt venues, giving them a sense of ownership over the space. One Memphis stakeholder said, "People can throw events there. That enhances the thought that the Shell is our venue. During the Shell's season, it's the Shell putting on the season; that's awesome, we feel invited and go partake. But other people throwing events enhances the idea that this is *our* Shell." This extends to the local arts and cultural community too: Levitt venues are also a vehicle for other arts organizations, sometimes in collaboration with the local Friends of Levitt, to provide similarly community-minded arts programming. The creation of a Friends of Levitt organization during the development process for each venue also helps to bind the facility to the community, ensuring that each Levitt venue is authentically *of* the community and paving the way for an ongoing relationship between the

community and the space. And because local Friends of Levitt staff take the stage prior to the concert to thank audiences for helping the Levitt venue serve as a community gathering space, simply attending a concert at a Levitt venue can feel like an act of civic engagement; concertgoers feel they are doing their part to help animate and sustain an important community space. Over a third of individual concertgoers also feel that Levitt concerts encourage and inspire them to be more civically engaged (see Figure 12).

Simply attending a concert at a Levitt venue can feel like an act of civic engagement.

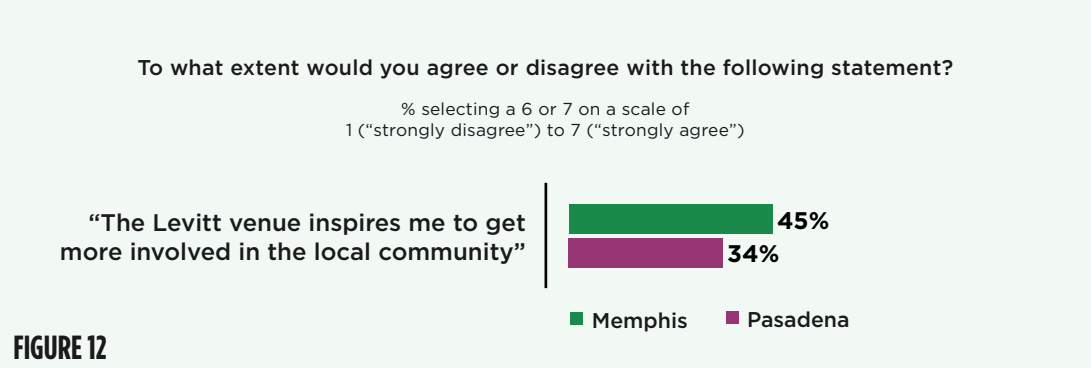


FIGURE 12

As with many placemaking projects, there appears to be a geographic gradient to Levitt's impact within the community: its influence, particularly with respect to the physical and economic revitalization it helps catalyze, is felt most strongly in the area immediately surrounding the venue and less strongly further away. Nevertheless, each venue serves a citywide, and sometimes region-wide, audience. Over half of the concertgoers at the Levitt Pavilion in Pasadena come from outside of Pasadena proper, and the audience at the Levitt Shell in Memphis represents a wide range of neighborhoods in Memphis as well as suburban communities outside of the city (the Memphis audience represents 79 different ZIP codes based on our survey data, though they are concentrated in the neighborhoods immediately around Overton Park). But we did find that, in many cases, the connection to community is strongest among those who live closest to the venue; for example, Pasadena residents felt a much stronger connection to the community while at concerts than their counterparts from outside of Pasadena (see Figure 13), though we did not see as stark a contrast in Memphis.

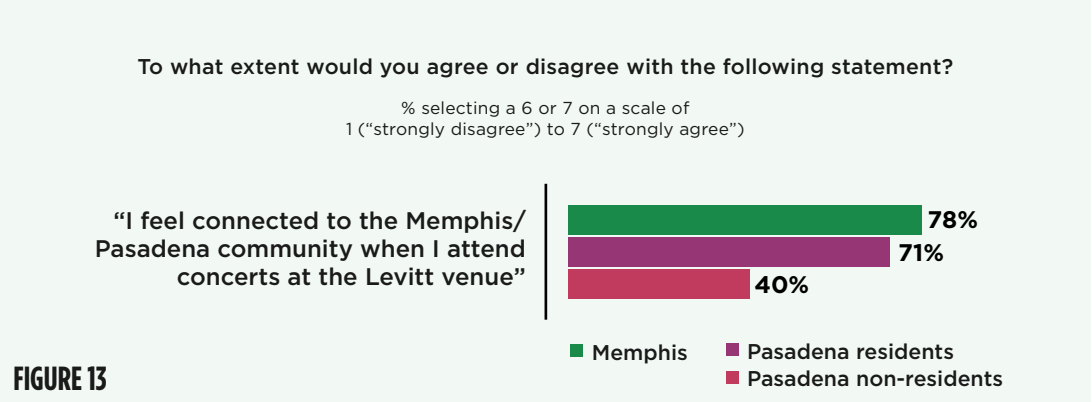


FIGURE 13

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we found that Levitt venues offer a hybrid experience of the arts and community connection, which helps to foster a deeply communal spirit at Levitt concerts. The musical performance offers an experience that is shared among those in attendance, while still allowing social interaction and connection among audience members to take place. Being able to interact with people within one's existing social network is an especially important part of the experience for many concertgoers, making Levitt venues a successful platform for what sociologists call "bonding social capital," or the ties that connect members of a group to each other and form a social safety net. We also found that Levitt venues foster interactions across social networks, building "bridging social capital," or points of connection, understanding, and exchange between and across diverse social groups. Levitt concertgoers feel a sense of "all are welcome," which is heightened by the fact that there are literally no doors or walls to keep some in the venue and others outside of it. The open lawn setting at all Levitt venues and free admission for the concert series engender a "leveling" effect: concertgoers feel a sense of equality with their fellow audience members, a sense that socioeconomic differences fade away while enjoying a Levitt concert. Still, the music is not incidental to those social effects; Levitt concerts are almost universally expected to include high-quality music, and audiences believe that the acts presented by Levitt venues will meet high standards whether they are local musicians or artists of national stature.

The presence of Levitt venues in these two cities played, and continues to play, an

important role in broader physical and economic revitalization efforts in the immediate neighborhoods and surrounding areas, as well. The restoration of existing band shells in both communities contributed to reinvestment in and reactivation of the parks where they are located. The Levitt venues also support revitalization of the area by spurring economic activity in the neighborhoods around the venue, with concertgoers patronizing local businesses such as bars, restaurants, and retail outlets before and after the show. In both Memphis and Pasadena, the Levitt venues are perceived to have had an important catalytic and contributory role in the broader revitalization of the neighborhoods beyond the parks, but in neither case was the venue solely responsible for those developments. This is probably true of most creative placemaking efforts, and it is consistent with the way the Levitt Foundation selects communities for a possible Levitt venue: considering both the community's *need* (whether it has substantial neglected or underutilized public space, and whether it lacks accessible arts and cultural offerings) and its *readiness* (whether there is commitment and support from local leadership and residents to improve a public space and the surrounding area). In both of the cities studied in this evaluation, that dual picture of need and readiness appears to have been well supported: the Levitt venue was one among several strategies for community vitality, and the readiness and commitment showed by local stakeholders was reflected in their support not just for the Levitt project but also for parallel undertakings with similar goals.

17. Markusen and Gadwa Nicodemus, 2010.

18. Silber, Bohne G., and Carole Rosenstein, PhD. Live from Your Neighborhood: A National Study of Outdoor Arts Festivals. Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2010. https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Festivals-Report.pdf

19. Putnam, Robert D. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

22. See for instance Vincent Welch, Jr., and Yonghyun Kim. "Race/ethnicity and Arts Participation." June 2010. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED519762.pdf.

23. The University of Chicago Cultural Policy Center. "Lasting Effects: Assessing the Future of Economic Impact Analysis of the Arts." May 2004. https://culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/sites/culturalpolicy.uchicago.edu/files/uploads/lastingEffects-report.pdf.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FIELD

Sarah Lee | Slover Linett

Every creative placemaking project is unique; the strategies that each will find successful depend highly on the goals it is trying to achieve and on the specific context in which it operates. Nevertheless, we offer a few thoughts about what these findings about Levitt venues, and the mechanisms by which they affect the individual concertgoers who participate and the broader community around them, suggest for the field at large. The following implications may be particularly salient for other creative placemaking projects that have free, live music programming at their core.

In creative placemaking, **programming** is as important as **place** in providing a compelling and communal experience for participants.

Levitt's success hinges, in part, on the way that individual venues have been able to build trust among their communities for consistently providing interesting, high quality, and diverse music programming. Without that trust, concert-goers likely wouldn't be as eager to return throughout the concert season—and frequency helps build community. Creative placemaking projects must pay equal attention to the creative and artistic programming they offer, as well as the physical attributes that support community-building and social capital-building—it may be helpful to think in terms of hybrid experiences, in which the art itself is closely interwoven with social connection and participation.

For music providers in particular, a venue's programming can communicate subtle but important messages regarding who might feel welcome.

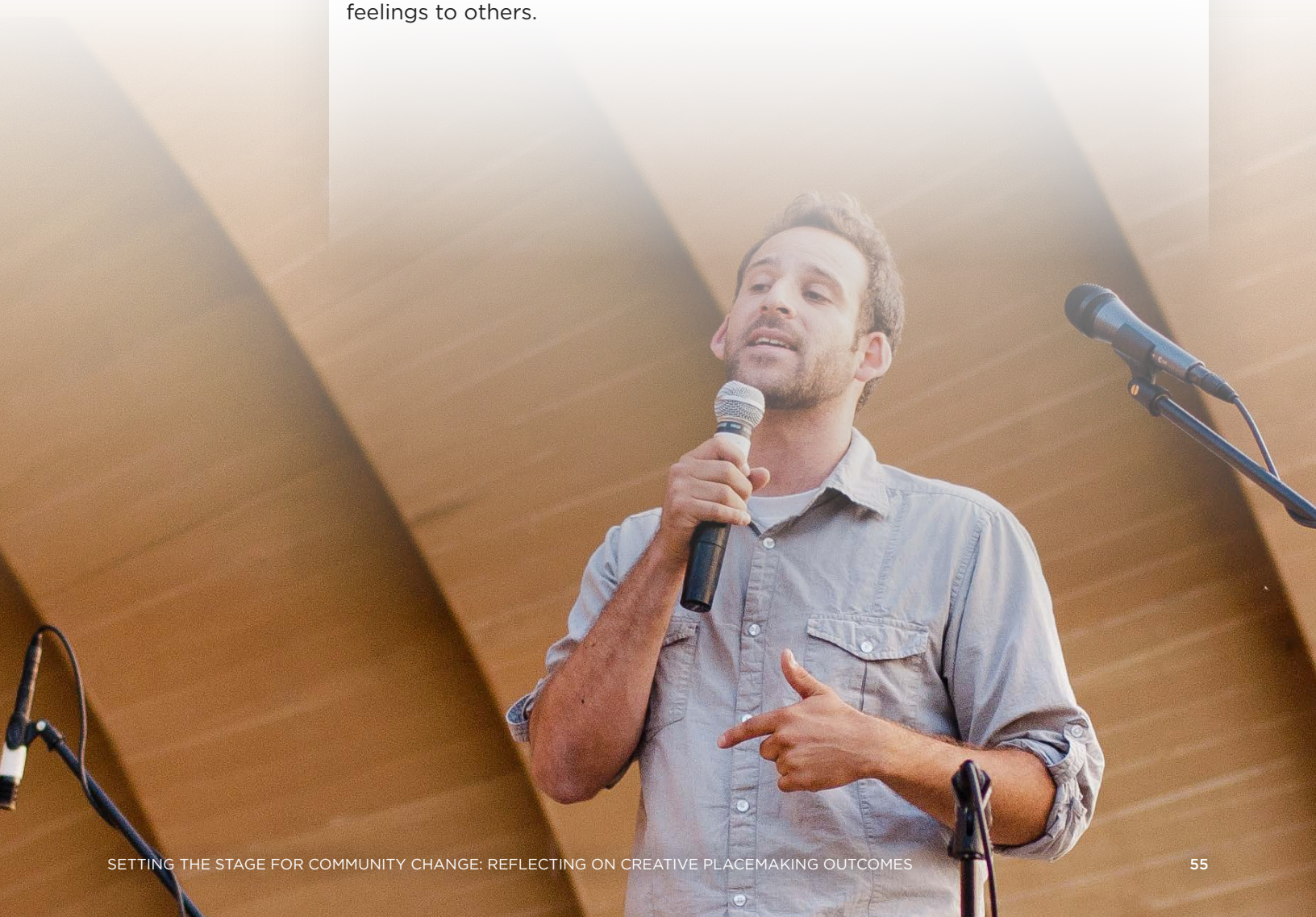
To bring together a truly diverse community, music-centered projects may need to include programming that authentically reflects the diverse backgrounds and varied tastes of that community. And the fact that admission is "free" may not necessarily be enough to inspire participation in outdoor live music concerts from a broad cross-section of the community. Offering a diverse and eclectic roster of music genres and performers, all of high quality, is critical to making sure the venue doesn't speak, or is perceived to speak, to just one segment of the population. Levitt audiences have developed a strong sense of trust in the programmatic decisions that the Friends of Levitt in their communities make, believing that the acts will be high quality, whether they are local musicians or artists of national stature. This trust makes it possible for Levitt to present a variety of music genres, thus attracting and building diverse audiences.

The physical and logistical attributes of a creative placemaking project will guide how people participate in, and how they benefit from, the experience.

Levitt venues are in public parks that serve a mixed socioeconomic community and are near public transit, offer an open lawn setting, and are free to attend, and those attributes seem critical to making the experience casual, informal, hybrid, democratized, and repeatable. When developing a project, creative placemakers and their colleagues should carefully consider how their space or location establishes or reinforces the kind of participation they hope to see—for instance, how does the design of the space inform whether people sit, stand, or dance, as well as whom they sit, stand, or dance next to—as well as how potential barriers to entry (like location, price, cultural context, perception, etc.) inform who participates and how frequently they participate.

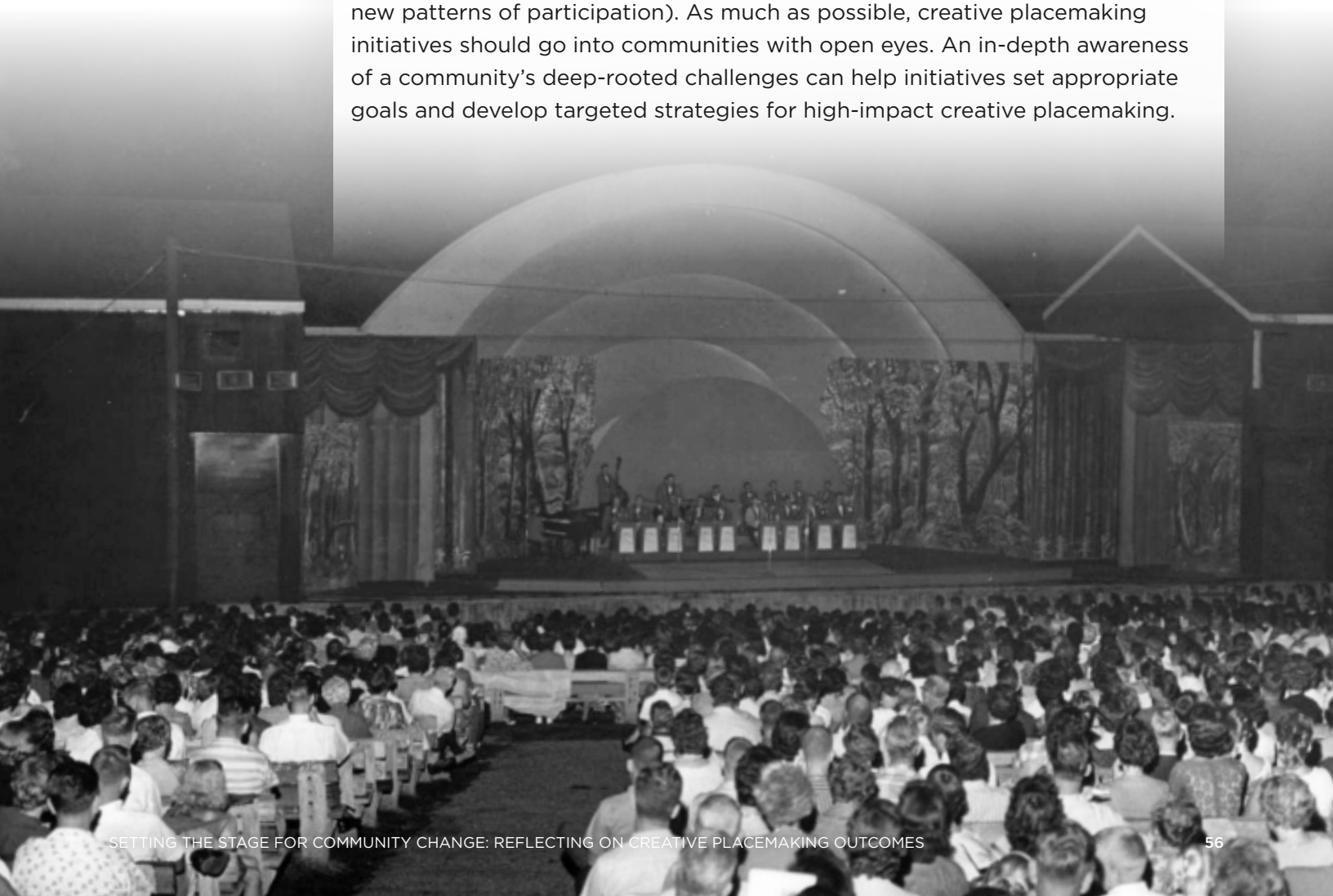
Communicating explicitly about a project's community-building goals with participants and residents can help to engage them as informal **ambassadors**.

When welcoming audiences to a concert, the local Friends of Levitt staff communicate explicitly that the intention of the Levitt program is to create connections and build community during the concert and beyond. Awareness of these goals allows community members to act in supportive ways, becoming "regulars" at the venue, inviting friends and neighbors to join them, and engaging in friendly conversations with those around them. Local audiences can be strong advocates for creative places, encouraging their friends, family, and community members to attend and support these initiatives. Communicating a clear, specific message about community-building goals gives audiences the language to cement their own feelings about the creative place and communicate those feelings to others.



The history and sociology of the community in which the creative placemaking project takes place, and the specific site that is chosen, will profoundly inform the way the project unfolds.

The Levitt Foundation deliberately considers a community's "need" and "readiness" when selecting communities to collaborate with, which helps to establish a meaningful presence long before concert programming even begins. By recognizing when a community is poised for revitalization or when there are other investments being made in a community's social capital, placemakers can leverage their work for maximum impact and can help tip a community toward new levels of engagement. But a community's existing characteristics and history aren't immediately rewritten when a creative placemaking project is introduced. For example, patterns of racial segregation or community divide can limit a project's potential if the specific site selected embeds those existing patterns (especially if the programmatic strategy doesn't intentionally invite new patterns of participation). As much as possible, creative placemaking initiatives should go into communities with open eyes. An in-depth awareness of a community's deep-rooted challenges can help initiatives set appropriate goals and develop targeted strategies for high-impact creative placemaking.

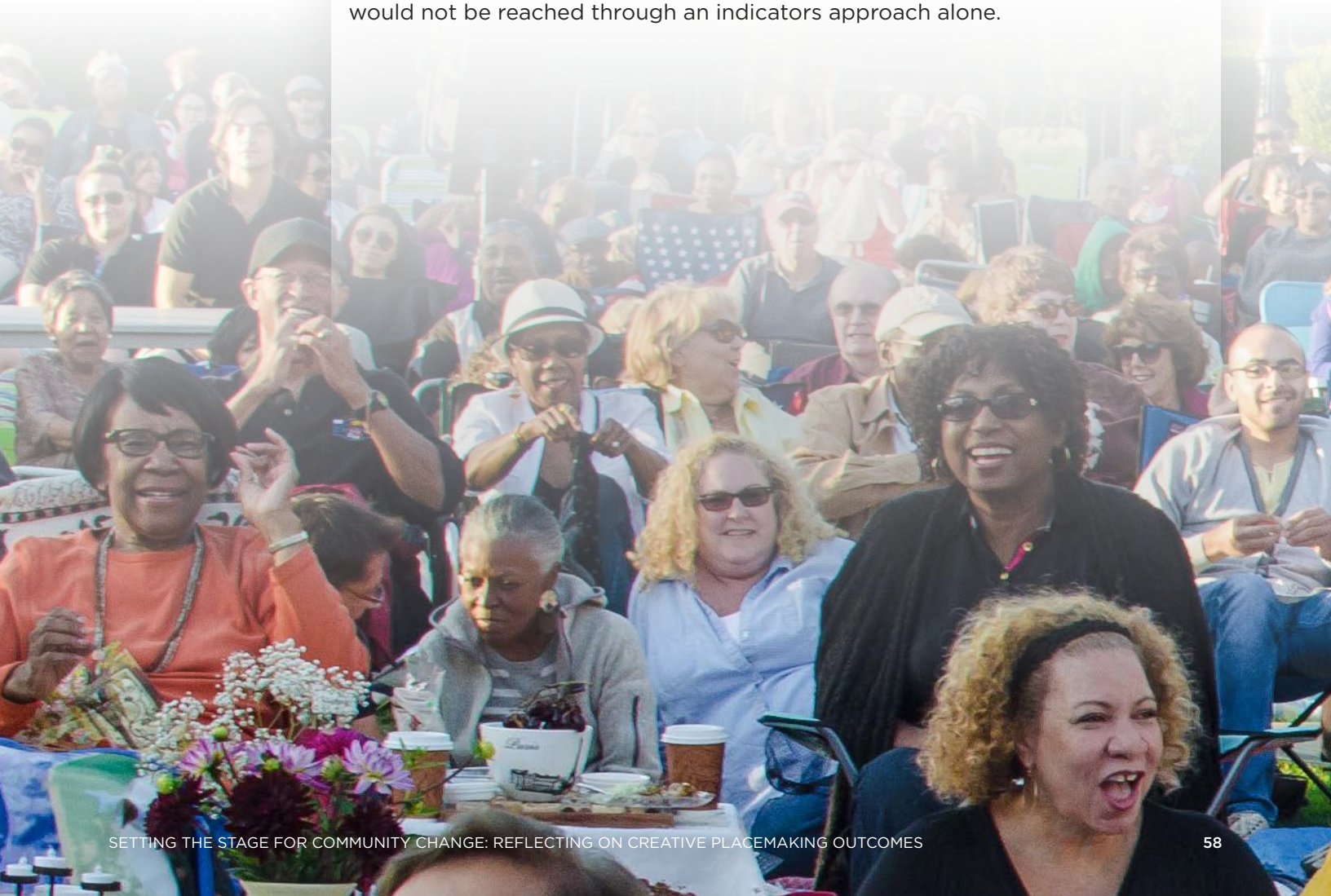


Partnership, **coordination**, and **collaboration** are essential creative placemaking skills and key to ensuring that the placemaking project remains **community-driven**.

Though the Levitt Foundation is a national organization that provides the framework and helps guide the process, the development of each Levitt venue is implemented by a local Friends of Levitt organization and operated by local staff. Such embeddedness in the local community can help to ensure that a creative placemaking project is undertaken in coordination with other ongoing revitalization or improvement efforts and that it creates mechanisms for the community to authentically influence how the project contributes to the community's most pressing needs. Given that the aims of most creative placemaking projects are ambitious and systemic—it may simply not be realistic for any single project alone to substantially move the needle on a community's overall livability or economic vitality or social connectedness—connecting it with other social efforts and stakeholders is critical for effectively unlocking the full potential of a project.

There **isn't** a **"one size fits all"** method of assessing the success of creative placemaking projects.

Indicators can show how a community has changed over time with respect to certain, nationally-available data, but they are limited in their ability both to connect those changes with a specific creative placemaking intervention and to assess a project with respect to its unique goals (data about which are rarely available in national datasets). We are, by no means, the first or only voices to say this, and the creative placemaking field has been embracing the notion that primary data collection efforts should be combined with the existing indicators frameworks in order to assess the impact of individual placemaking projects. We believe that this study illustrates this, showing how project-specific assessment reveals new insights about both the efficacy of creative placemaking projects and the mechanisms by which they operate—insights that would not be reached through an indicators approach alone.



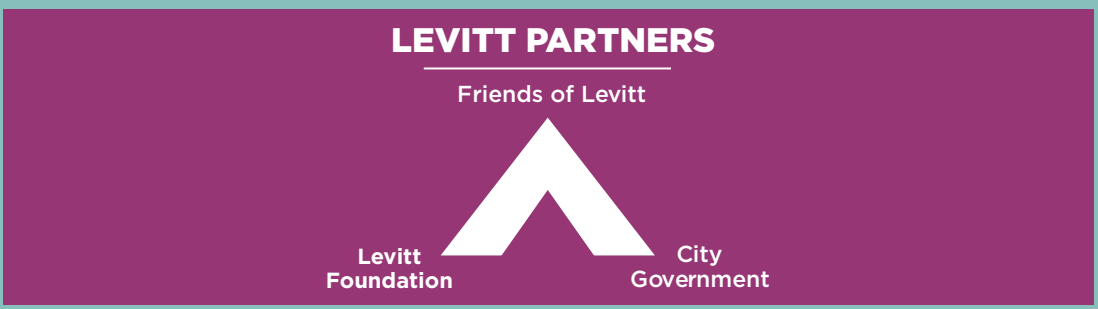
ABOUT THE PERMANENT LEVITT VENUE MODEL

Permanent Levitt venues represent significant creative placemaking investments for the Levitt Foundation. Each begins with a community coming together, determined to transform an underused public space into a vibrant destination through the arts. City leaders and engaged citizens connect with the Levitt Foundation to form a partnership to build or renovate an outdoor venue in the public space and to present 50 free, professional concerts of the highest caliber every year.

As locally-driven efforts, permanent Levitt venues reflect the character of their city as seen through venue design and concert programming. Each venue is managed, programmed and supported by an independent Friends of Levitt nonprofit partner. Typically geared to cities with populations over 400,000, permanent Levitt venues are located on public land, usually in parks, and are City-owned facilities in locations accessible to a wide range of socioeconomic groups. The City commits to maintain the Levitt venue and site year-round. Through this public/private partnership, resources are leveraged to reduce expenses and ensure cost-efficient operations.

Once a permanent Levitt venue opens, it becomes a magnet for community. People from throughout the community are involved and invested in the success of the concert series, from volunteers, concertgoers, and donors to community partners and local sponsors. When Levitt concerts are not in season, permanent Levitt venues are available for use by other organizations such as nonprofits, schools and universities, and community groups for a broad range of events including additional music events, theatrical performances, community programs, festivals, holiday celebrations, and private functions.

While each permanent Levitt venue receives the majority of its annual funding from the community, each benefits from the annual support, resources and best practices provided by the Levitt Foundation.



ABOUT THE PERMANENT LEVITT VENUE MODEL

Each permanent Levitt venue shares the common mission of building community through music. The success of each Levitt venue arises from the close collaboration of the local Friends of Levitt nonprofit, City government, and the Levitt Foundation. Each partner commits to its role in launching and sustaining the venue and annual free programming.

FRIENDS OF LEVITT

- A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a local board of directors and professional staff
- Leads capital campaign to raise funds to construct the new Levitt venue
- Produces annual Levitt series of 50 free, professional concerts featuring an array of music genres
- Raises majority of funds to sustain operations and support the annual concert series from the community
- Manages Levitt venue year-round in partnership with the City
- Participates in national Levitt programs and initiatives
- Receives grants, support and resources from the Levitt Foundation

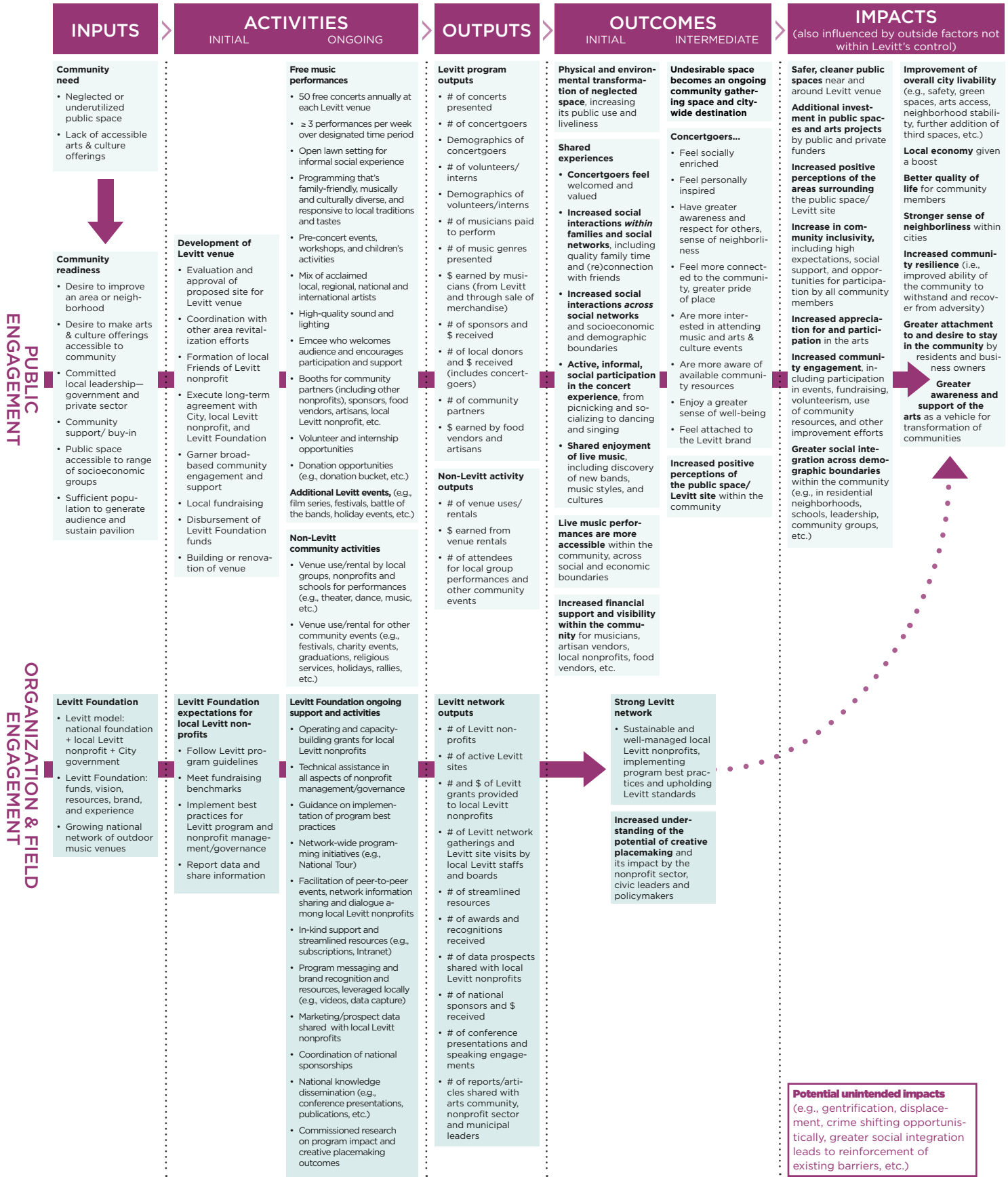
CITY

- Takes an active role in construction of the new Levitt venue
- Provides ongoing maintenance of the Levitt venue, site infrastructure and surrounding grounds
- Provides free use of the Levitt venue to Friends of Levitt for the annual concert series
- Provides access to public restrooms, utilities and other resources at no cost to Friends of Levitt

LEVITT FOUNDATION

- Provides seed funding to renovate or build an outdoor music venue, known as a Levitt Pavilion or Levitt Shell
- Provides guidance in establishing the partnership between Friends of Levitt and the City
- Provides multi-year annual operating support to partially fund the Friends of Levitt nonprofit partner
- Offers capacity building tools, support resources and technical assistance in all aspects of nonprofit management to help achieve maximum impact
- Provides best practices in areas such as operations, fundraising, community outreach, and artist relations
- Provides streamlined support and cost-saving resources to the network of Friends of Levitt nonprofit partners
- Facilitates information sharing and peer-to-peer networking opportunities with all Friends of Levitt partners

PERMANENT LEVITT VENUE PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL



LEVITT PAVILION PASADENA | Opened in 2003

Levitt Pavilion Pasadena is located in Memorial Park, a few blocks from City Hall and immediately adjacent to the city's thriving and historic commercial district known as Old Pasadena. During the first half of the 20th century, the WPA-era gold band shell that would later become a Levitt Pavilion was a popular community destination where outdoor concerts were a regular Sunday activity for residents of this Southern California city, located 12 miles from downtown Los Angeles.

Though by the 1950s, Pasadena's once bustling downtown surrounding Memorial Park began to decline, nearby public transit was discontinued, and many residents' homes were demolished to make way for a new highway that divided the city in half. As Pasadena's downtown area took a turn for the worse, the city experienced stark income disparity, creating areas of extreme wealth and poverty within the city limits. For nearly 50 years, visitors to Memorial Park remained sparse, crime in the park ran rampant, and the historic band shell went largely unused.

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, local efforts to reinvigorate Old Pasadena with new businesses and restaurants were gaining momentum. Meanwhile, Mortimer Levitt had written letters to mayors across the country—including then Pasadena Mayor Bill Bogaard—about a new venture philanthropy program developed with his daughter, Liz Levitt Hirsch, that would provide funding to renovate neglected park band shells and program 50 free concerts annually. The community welcomed the opportunity—recognizing its potential to complement the improvements that had been made thus far in Old Pasadena—and a public/private partnership was formed. Since its opening in 2003, audiences have grown to more than 100,000 people every year from both the local community and greater Los Angeles, enjoying Levitt Pavilion Pasadena's diverse lineup of celebrated musicians, bringing vitality back to the park. As a resident of Southern California, Liz Levitt Hirsch served as a founding board member of Friends of Levitt Pavilion Pasadena for 10 years.

LEVITT PAVILION LOS ANGELES | Opened in 2007

Levitt Pavilion Los Angeles is located just west of downtown in MacArthur Park, one of the oldest and most historically significant parks in Los Angeles. Founded in 1886 as Westlake Park, throughout the early 20th century the park was considered L.A.'s premiere urban oasis, attracting wealthy residents from the surrounding communities who came to enjoy the glistening lake and performances at its outdoor band shell.

Starting in the late 20th century, however, MacArthur Park began to experience decline. In the 1980s the park's surrounding neighborhood of Westlake witnessed an influx of Central American immigrants who sought refuge from the violence in their home countries; however, the neighborhood infrastructure was unable to accommodate this significant increase in population. Westlake became one of the most densely populated neighborhoods in the country, with high rates of poverty. By the end of the 20th century, the park had become notorious for prostitution, gang-related violence, drug dealing and other criminal activities. Local residents stayed away, and MacArthur Park's once vibrant band shell stood closed, covered in graffiti and surrounded by a chain-link fence.

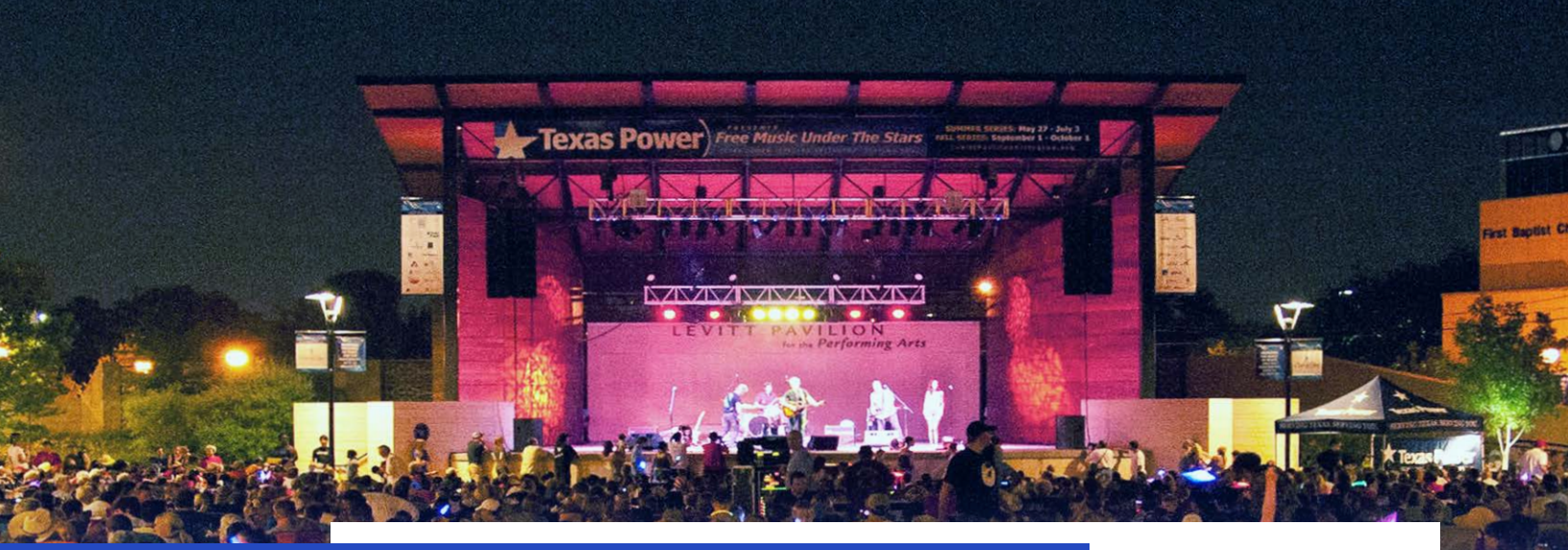
Positive changes began to occur in the early 2000s with a grassroots effort to revitalize MacArthur Park. Community leaders and groups partnered with the Los Angeles Police Department and together, they worked collaboratively to create a safer environment for local residents. Their efforts paved the way for the introduction of consistent and family-friendly programming in the park. Individuals associated with the Levitt Pavilion in Pasadena worked with Westlake leaders, stakeholders and community organizations in creating a partnership with the City of Los Angeles and the Levitt Foundation to renovate the existing band shell and program free concerts. With the 2007 launch of Levitt Pavilion Los Angeles, families began returning to the park. This served as a catalyst for the park's transformation and brought momentum to the City's redevelopment efforts, inspiring the City to make subsequent investments in the park, including the development of new soccer fields, a playground, public restrooms, lighted walkways and other park amenities. Since its opening, the free concerts at Levitt Pavilion Los Angeles have attracted 50,000 people on average every summer.

LEVITT SHELL MEMPHIS | Opened in 2008

The Levitt Shell in Memphis is located in the picturesque and expansive 342-acre Overton Park in the city's Midtown. This WPA-era band shell, known as the Overton Park Shell, first came to life in the 1930s when the Memphis Open Air Theater produced free orchestra performances, light opera and musicals. Beginning in the 1950s, numerous musical legends graced the stage, including Elvis Presley (where he made his professional debut in 1954), Johnny Cash, Webb Pierce, Booker T. Jones, Isaac Hayes and The Grateful Dead. For years, the Overton Park Shell served as a gathering spot for Memphians citywide to spend their summer evenings, enjoying music under the stars.

And yet years later, this same band shell suffered a fate similar to many other band shells across the country, when a period of disinvestment in parks and public spaces took hold in cities during the latter half of the 20th century. The Overton Park Shell stood dormant and run down, attracting criminal activity. In 1982 a community of investors attempted to preserve the Shell and see it returned to community use. It was renamed the "Raoul Wallenberg Shell" in honor of the Swedish diplomat who saved thousands of Jews from concentration camps in Europe during World War II. More preservation campaigns followed, like "Save Our Shell," but they all struggled to raise sufficient funds to ensure the Shell's viability. By 2004, the City of Memphis had closed the Shell, citing numerous code violations and deeming it a liability, and it stood in grave danger of being razed to make room for a parking lot.

However, this closure was short-lived. By 2005, local community leaders had connected with the Levitt Foundation and began working with the City to support the Shell's renovation and return to consistent programming. In September 2008, the Shell re-opened as the Levitt Shell, once again bringing Memphians together through outdoor music. Since its relaunch, the Levitt Shell has consistently attracted diverse audiences of over 125,000 people every year and has subsequently sparked investments in Overton Park, as well as surrounding commercial districts like Overton Square.



LEVITT PAVILION ARLINGTON | Opened in 2008

Levitt Pavilion Arlington is located in Founders Plaza in downtown Arlington, Texas. Located 20 miles west of downtown Dallas and 12 miles east of downtown Fort Worth, Arlington has long functioned as a community in tune with its larger neighbors. For much of the 20th century, Arlington locals regularly headed to Dallas and Fort Worth for employment as well as entertainment, while Arlington's downtown lay stagnant with few businesses and social offerings.

This trend continued during the second half of the 20th century, when new development shifted to the areas of Arlington near the main thoroughfare between Fort Worth and Dallas. The major amusement park, Six Flags Over Texas, moved attention and business activity away from downtown in 1961. This pattern persisted for the next three decades, further accelerated by the 1994 opening of the Texas Rangers ballpark. As a result, Arlington's downtown experienced a period of disinvestment, fueling the destruction of historic structures and urban sprawl.

By 2000, as Arlington's population grew to more than 330,000 residents, city leaders sought ways to elevate the quality of life for local residents and transform the downtown into a thriving center of economic activity. In 2006, city leaders and engaged citizens came together and formed a partnership with the Levitt Foundation, viewing the development of an outdoor music venue as an opportunity to create vibrancy in their downtown. There was no existing band shell, so Levitt Pavilion Arlington was the first Levitt venue to be constructed from the ground up, built in a newly created public space directly across from City Hall.

Since opening in 2008, Levitt Pavilion Arlington audiences have grown to more than 100,000 people each year—helping to transform the downtown area into a popular citywide, and often regional, destination. More than a dozen restaurants have opened nearby, and the Levitt Pavilion also has served as a catalyst for major investment from the University of Texas at Arlington, which focused its $300 million expansion into the downtown area with new residences, shops, eateries, parking and an indoor performance venue. Today, Levitt Pavilion Arlington is considered the "crown jewel" of revitalization efforts in the city's downtown.

LEVITT PAVILION STEELSTACKS | Opened in 2011

Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks is located on the SteelStacks arts and culture campus in Bethlehem, Pa., a post industrial city and university town of 75,000 residents in the Greater Lehigh Valley, home to a population of approximately 850,000 residents. The Levitt Pavilion's location at the base of the former Bethlehem Steel blast furnaces speaks to the area's industrial past as the country's second largest steel producer, with the company employing 30,000 workers at its height. When Bethlehem Steel ceased operations in 1995 and filed for bankruptcy in 2002, the result did more than decimate the region's economy and shatter the city's longstanding identity. The vast acreage became the largest private brownfield in the United States.

In an effort to reinvent itself and reduce the negative impact on the city and the surrounding Lehigh Valley, as well as breathe new life into the depressed south side of Bethlehem, in the 2000s local stakeholders, including the City and its Redevelopment Authority, came together to designate the site for reuse as a new arts and cultural campus. A Master Plan was created that called for an outdoor amphitheater, and in 2009, the Levitt Foundation was contacted about a potential partnership.

Since opening in 2011, Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks has become a powerful symbol for Bethlehem's rebirth as a music and cultural destination, with audiences at the free Levitt concerts exceeding 90,000 in 2016. Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks has become a magnet for Bethlehem's ethnically and socioeconomically diverse residents and the Lehigh Valley as a whole—which is now the fastest growing region in Pennsylvania. Since the launch of Levitt Pavilion SteelStacks, the south side of Bethlehem has experienced a renaissance as new businesses and restaurants have opened their doors. In 2014, Bethlehem was named among the "100 Best Places to live" in the U.S. by Money Magazine. The Levitt Pavilion, with its cantilevered steel band shell, has also won multiple design awards.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to acknowledge and thank several people whose contributions to this study made it possible. Together, we'd like to thank the leadership and staff of the Levitt Foundation for commissioning and supporting this work and for their enthusiasm for sharing these insights with the creative placemaking and the live, outdoor music fields. In particular, we'd like to thank Sharon Yazowski and Vanessa Silberman for their colleagueship and guidance throughout.

We'd also like to thank the four colleagues who served as advisors to this study from the beginning: Roberto Bedoya (Cultural Affairs Manager, City of Oakland), Ian David Moss (Founder and CEO, Createquity), Anne Gadwa Nicodemus (Principal, Metris Arts Consulting), and Michael Rushton (Professor, School of Environmental and Public Affairs, Indiana University). All four were generous with their time and wisdom, and we're grateful for their thought partnership in interpreting and making meaning out of the data collected throughout this process.

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Nicole Baltazar is an associate at Slover Linett, where she designs and conducts audience research for a wide variety of arts and culture organizations nationwide, including the New York Philharmonic, the Getty Trust, and the National Museum of Natural History. She uses her academic background in experimental psychology and a varied methodological and analytical toolkit to uncover audiences' deep-seated attitudes, motivations, and barriers, and to help understand how arts and cultural organizations can forge more meaningful relationships with the communities they serve. After hours, Baltazar also teaches an evening class at the University of Chicago's Seminars for Endorsement of Science and Mathematics Educators (SESAME) program; her class is aimed at K-12 teachers and helps translate developmental psychology research into useful classroom strategies. She earned her PhD in psychology from the University of Chicago in 2012; her dissertation investigated how social cues like language and race influence adults' and children's perception of and memory for faces. Her work has been published in high-impact peer-reviewed journals such as *Curator: The Museum Journal*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, and *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, and has been presented at conferences including Visitor Studies Association and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.

Sarah Lee is president of Slover Linett and leads the firm's work with cultural funders, arts organizations, and other cultural and creative placemaking nonprofits. She guides the firm's evolving exploration of cultural ecosystems, community and audience engagement, and organizational development and its relationship to social and civic impact. She designs research and evaluation studies that create new knowledge about community engagement and social impact for individual cultural and creative placemaking organizations and the field at large, leading Slover Linett's work with the James Irvine Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, as well as the

Mortimer & Mimi Levitt Foundation. Lee is the co-author of "New Data Directions for the Cultural Landscape: Toward a Better-Informed, Stronger Sector" (2014), a whitepaper for DataArts; "Connecting with Audiences: Insights from Seattle's Wallace Excellence Awards Initiative" (2012), for the Washington State Arts Commission; "A Laboratory for Relevance: Findings from the Arts Innovation Fund" (2012) for the James Irvine Foundation; and "Charting New Paths Through Innovative Collaboration: Chicago Arts Organization Needs Study" (2012), for the Illinois Arts Council. She speaks frequently at conferences, including The Art of Placemaking Conference and the annual American Alliance of Museums conference, and serves on the board of ArtsBoston. Prior to joining Slover Linett, Lee completed doctoral coursework in urban and cultural policy, program evaluation, and econometric analysis at the University of Chicago's Harris School of Public Policy, where she also earned her master's degree. She earned her BA in government cum laude from Harvard University.

Peter Linett is chairman & chief idea officer of Slover Linett, where he and his colleagues help museums of all types, arts organizations, public media enterprises, and cultural funders understand their audiences and communities, evaluate their programs, and experiment with new strategies to diversify and deepen engagement. Linett's research focuses on the changing values that shape cultural production and participation, and his clients have included the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, Smithsonian Institution, Goodman Theatre, Chicago Public Media, James Irvine Foundation, and arts grantees of the Wallace Foundation, among many other cultural and informal-learning institutions. He recently founded a nonprofit, Culture Kettle, to explore under-examined questions about public engagement in the arts and sciences. He is co-PI of the Evolving Culture of Science Engagement initiative (a Culture Kettle partnership with MIT and the Norman Lear Center at USC) and a member of the editorial board of *Curator: The Museum Journal*, where he previously held editorial staff positions for 12 years. A former associate of the Cultural Policy Center at the University of Chicago, Linett helped develop the Center's national study of the building boom in cultural facilities, *Set in Stone* (funded by the Kresge, MacArthur, and Mellon Foundations). He has been an advisor, invited speaker, and grant reviewer for the National Endowment for the Arts and an

invited speaker at organizations including the Arts Marketing Association (UK), Association of Science and Technology Centers (US), CultureSource (Detroit), University of Victoria (Canada), and University of Chicago. Linett serves on the advisory boards of London-based Guerilla Science and New York-based Museum Hack. Linett graduated with high honors from Yale University and later pursued graduate coursework in the philosophy of art.

Joanna Woronkowicz is an assistant professor in the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University in Bloomington where she teaches and conducts research on cultural policy and nonprofit management. Her co-authored book, *Building Better Arts Facilities: Lessons from a U.S. National Study* (Routledge 2014) examines trends in cultural building in the U.S. between 1994 and 2008. She earned her PhD in Public Policy from the University of Chicago.

Roberto Bedoya has consistently supported art-based civic engagement projects and advocated for expanded definitions of inclusion and belonging throughout his career. He is the Cultural Affairs Manager for the City of Oakland. As the former executive director of the Tucson Pima Arts Council (TPAC), he established the innovative P.L.A.C.E (People, Land, Arts, Culture and Engagement) Initiative to support artist initiatives in Tucson, Arizona. Bedoya's tenure as executive director of the National Association of Artists' Organizations (NAAO) from 1996 to 2001 included serving as co-plaintiff in the lawsuit Finley vs. NEA. His essays "U.S. Cultural Policy: Its Politics of Participation, Its Creative Potential" and "Creative Placemaking and the Politics of Belonging and Dis-Belonging" reframed the discussion on cultural policy to shed light on exclusionary practices in cultural policy decision making. Bedoya is also a poet, whose work has appeared in numerous publications, and an art consultant, with projects for Creative Capital Foundation, the Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the Urban Institute.

Ian David Moss specializes in the alignment of evidence and action in the social sector. As Vice President, Strategy & Analytics for Fractured Atlas, a nonprofit technology company that serves artists and arts organizations, Moss works to build a culture of learning and facilitates informed decision-making both within his own organization and beyond. Evidence-based strategic frameworks that he helped create have guided the distribution of nearly $100 million in grants to date by some of the nation's most important arts funders. Moss is a serial entrepreneur with a strong track record of envisioning and implementing creative solutions to longstanding problems. His successful ventures include Createquity, a think tank and online publication investigating the most important issues in the arts and what we, individually and collectively, can do about them; the Cultural Research Network, an open resource-sharing forum for self-identified researchers in the arts that serves hundreds of members worldwide; and C4: The Composer/Conductor Collective, the first organization of its kind and

the largest chorus exclusively singing music from the past 25 years. Moss has been named one of the top leaders in the nonprofit arts sector by his peers each year since 2010, and is in demand as a writer, editor, speaker, grant panelist, consultant, and guest lecturer. He holds BA and MBA degrees from Yale University and is based in Washington, DC.

Anne Gadwa Nicodemus is a former choreographer turned urban planner, who leads Metris Arts Consulting. Metris provides planning, research, and evaluation where art meets urban planning. Anne co-authored the seminal *Creative Placemaking* report (2010) for the Mayor's Institute on City Design, which helped define the field. Through Metris, she undertakes place-based arts and culture ecology studies, arts and culture plans for cities and towns, and robust project evaluations. Her ability to undertake rigorous research and effectively connect it to big-picture trends have garnered the field's respect. Since 2012, Nicodemus has been named annually to WESTAF blog's peer-nominated list of the top 50 most powerful and influential people in the nonprofit arts, for being "increasingly recognized as one of the key, pivotal point people in the work of arts data and research." Recent projects include a creative economy snapshot of the city of Minneapolis, a case study of how a creative space in Zimbabwe fosters activism, and an arts and culture plan for a small city in Minnesota. Visit metrisarts.com to access reports, journal articles, and book chapters, including: "Fuzzy Vibrancy" (*Journal of Cultural Trends*); "Creative Placemaking: How to Do It Well" (*Community Development Investment Review*); "City Creative Industry Strategies" (*Aspen Review*); *How Art Spaces Matter* (Artspace); and "Arts and Culture in Urban and Regional Planning: A Review and Research Agenda" (*Journal of Planning and Education Research*).

Michael Rushton is a professor and the former director of Arts Administration Programs in SPEA. He now serves as associate vice president for University Academic Affairs and director of strategic planning for Indiana University. As a professor, Dr. Rushton's expertise and teaching is in the economics, management, and public policy of the arts. His publications include articles on such topics as public funding for the arts, the role of nonprofit organizations, taxation, copyright, freedom of expression, and the arts and local development. He is the editor of *Creative Communities: Art Works in Economic Development* (2013) and the author of *Strategic Pricing for the Arts* (2014). Before joining Indiana University in 2006, he held faculty positions in Canada, the U.S., and Australia, and served as a senior policy advisor to the government of the Canadian province of Saskatchewan.

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